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SPECIAL REPORT: PROSPECTS
CHOPTALK GOES TO COLUMBIA TO MEET 16-YEAR-OLD PRODIGY JULIO TEHERAN AND HIS FAMILY

ChopTalk

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE ATLANTA BRAVES

A VISIT WITH THE ACE

JOHN SMOLTZ TAKES YOU ON A PRIVATE TOUR OF HIS 18-ACRE ESTATE

BRAIN TRUST

SCHUERHOLZ HANDS REINS TO NEW GM FRANK WREN

"JUST MARRIED"

AN EXCLUSIVE LOOK AT THE WEDDING OF JEFF AND CATIE FRANCOEUR

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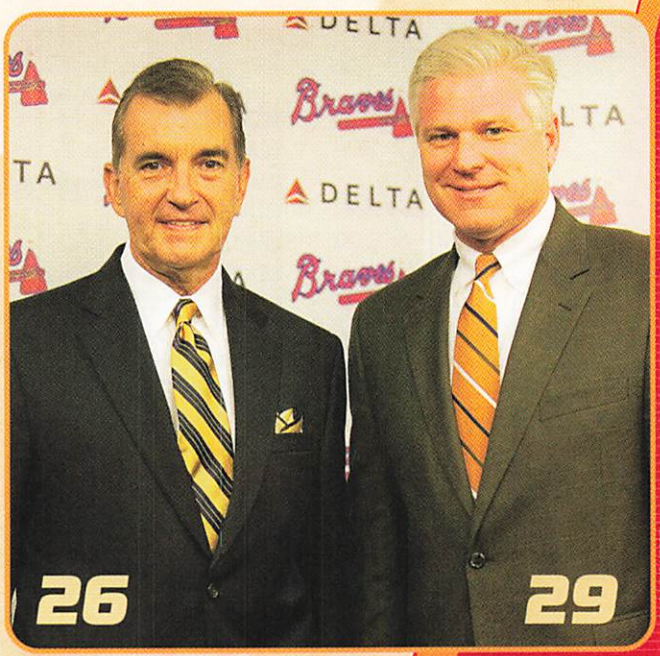

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHNNY GALEA

BILL SETLIFF

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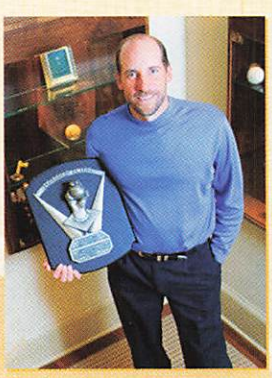

COVER CREDITS

JOHN SMOLTZ
by Allison Shirreffs

Julio Teheran
by Bill Setliff;
Jeff and Catie Francoeur
by Patty Rasmussen:

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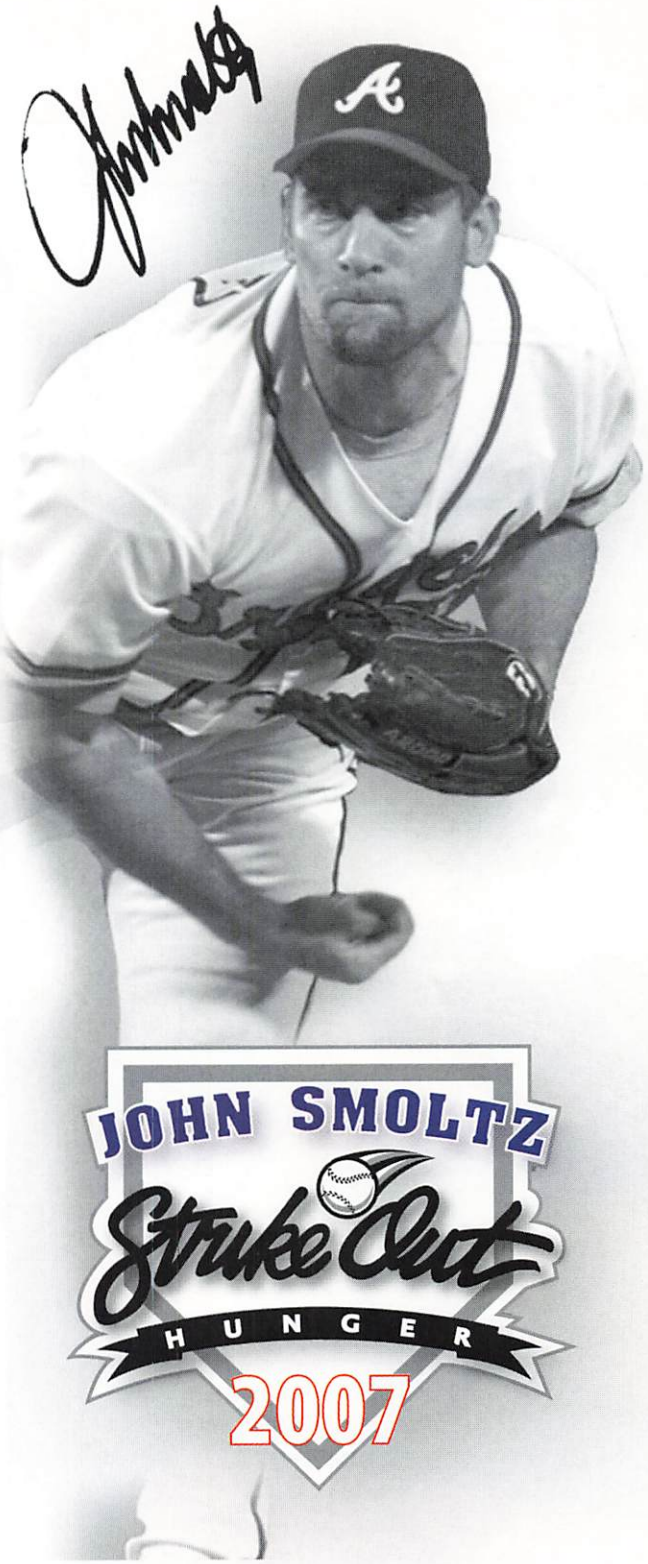
Thank you John for another great season helping those in need!

Strike Out Hunger!



It is never too late to get great holiday items autographed by John Smoltz.

SEND IN YOUR DONATION TODAY.

Atlanta Braves pitcher John Smoltz knows it's important to build a better community. That's why John is helping the Atlanta Community Food Bank strike out hunger. We need your help too! You can help Georgians in need by joining John's Strike Out Hunger team. John is donating $100 to the Food Bank for every strikeout this season. And you can receive a sports item autographed by John for every pledge YOU make. As a special thank you for your donation and support, each paid pledge will receive a gift based on the pledge levels shown below. All gifts are tax deductible less the retail value of the item(s) received. All gifts will be autographed by John Smoltz.

Yes!

I will pledge $_____

Signed Gear		Total
Limited Edition Photograph	$ 25 ___	$___
Baseball Cap	$ 75 ___	$___
Baseball	$ 150 ___	$___
Official Bat	$ 400 ___	$___
Official Glove	$ 750 ___	$___
Official Smoltz Braves Jersey	$1250___	$___
All items are	$2500___	$___

Name:_____

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City:_____ State:_____ Zip:_____

Phone:_____

The Strike Out Hunger season begins with the Braves opening home game and ends with the final regular season home game. All items based on availability and will be sent to you at the close of the Braves season and upon receipt of payment.

For more information call 404-892-FEED ext.1246. Or visit ACFB.org

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Please make checks payable to Atlanta Community Food Bank.

ATLANTA COMMUNITY FOOD BANK

Nourishing stronger communities.

JOHN SMOLTZ

The feature Smoltz likes best about his 18-acre estate is his ability to accommodate large groups of family, friends and business associates for get-togethers ranging from an overnight Thanksgiving family celebration for 26 to fund raising events for the school he helped found.

Former Braves catcher Greg Olson, a friend of Smoltz's and a real estate agent, negotiated the deal three years ago that enabled Smoltz to purchase this home in north Fulton County.

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN
PHOTOS BY JASON SPRUILL

No one could ever accuse John Smoltz of doing anything half-heartedly. Whether as a Cy Young Award winning starting pitcher (1996) or a Rolaids Relief Man of the Year closer (2002), his approach to pitching is all or nothing at all.

The on-the-field results through the years speak for themselves. Just this season alone, Smoltz, who turned 40 in May, sported a 14-8 record with a 3.11 ERA and was third in the National League with 197 strikeouts. In August, he passed Hall of Famer Phil Niekro as the Braves' all-time strikeout leader.

But Smoltz would be the first to point out that baseball is but a fraction of his life, and its importance is measured by how it enhances the most important things - his family and his faith. The same passion he brings to pitching is injected into his off the field pursuits.

"Baseball has given me an extraordinary platform, and the means to do things I never would have thought possible," said John, who has been outspoken about his Christian faith and was a major force in the development of King's Ridge Christian School, where his four children attend.

Three years ago, in an attempt to move closer to where King's Ridge would be built in north Fulton County, John and his now former wife, Dyan, purchased 18 acres of land on which sat an 18,000-square-foot, unfinished, rambling estate house. The house had never been lived in, and the seller was motivated.

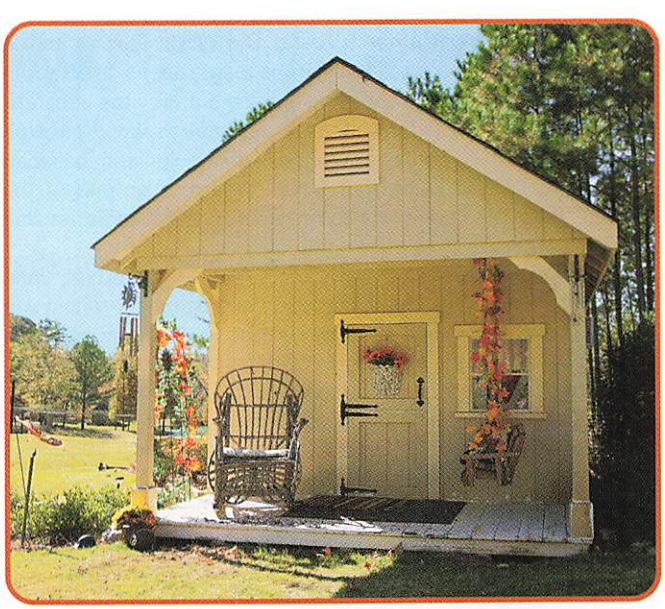
"In fact, (former Braves catcher) Greg Olson, helped put the deal together," said John, who saw more than living space in the property. "I felt this place had the potential to be something really special. The amount of land, the space in the house... if we were going to get this place, I felt there were ways to use it in ministry or outreach that really appealed to me."

And in fact, that's what the property has become - a place for Smoltz to host events for some of his favorite causes.

"We've already held seven events here, either school or family events," he said. "We're having another event in early December for King's Ridge."

But it's the family gatherings, like Thanksgiving 2006, that give him the greatest satisfaction.

"There were 26 people staying at the house, under this roof, the whole time," he said. "Nobody had to stay in hotels. We had great weather the whole week. We played football out back, ate our



This cute playhouse provides a nice retreat for Smoltz's daughters.

Smoltz's passion for golf is legendary, and it's very apparent on the grounds that include three regulation golf holes, a putting green (shown here) and a specially designed equipment room (below) that's part of the free-standing garage.

meals here, played games. You can't give me anything I love more than having my family around."

When the Smoltzes divorced earlier this year, John remained in the house. The children, Andrew (16), Rachel (14), Carly (10) and Kelly (8), spend every other week there. Dyan lives close by.

"In a weird way, this house has helped me relax," said John. "I'm not into sunsets and stuff like that, but it's very peaceful here, and I've learned to enjoy the solitude when I have it."

For its size, the Smoltz home doesn't feel ostentatious. The impressive front portico has a rustic, Old World look to it. The foyer, complete with a black baby grand piano, opens directly into a formal living room with windows looking out over the substantial grounds. To one side of the foyer is Smoltz's wood-paneled office with built-in bookcases filled with books and baseball memorabilia. His Rolaids Relief Man Award is on one of the shelves. There also are items commemorating World Series and All-Star Games.

Asked which item on display is most meaningful to him, John picks up a photo of his friend, comedian and game show host Jeff Foxworthy and his brother Jay, each wearing Braves jerseys bearing their last name and the number "49". The framed photo is signed by the brothers and inscribed, "To John: You never faced the best."

A massage chair is in the office, and Smoltz's Ragdoll cat, Stormy, wanders through where John sits at the desk and scrolls through e-mails. A doorway connects the office to his bedroom, decorated in tans and light blue, and a little-used private sitting room.

Though the first floor rooms - living room, dining room, and kitchen/family room - are separate, they are all connected by doorways and by a main hall running almost the length of the house. The design gives each room a cozy rather than overwhelming feel. John admits the formal living and dining rooms are rarely used.

"We might use this space if we're having a party or get-together," he said. "But usually that takes place outside or in other parts of the house."

The heart of the home is a very large kitchen with a dining area off to the side connected to a large, much-used family room with a huge fireplace and hearth on one side of the room and dominated by a cathedral ceiling with exposed beams and windows looking out toward the grounds. John points to an oversized easy chair facing the television and fireplace.

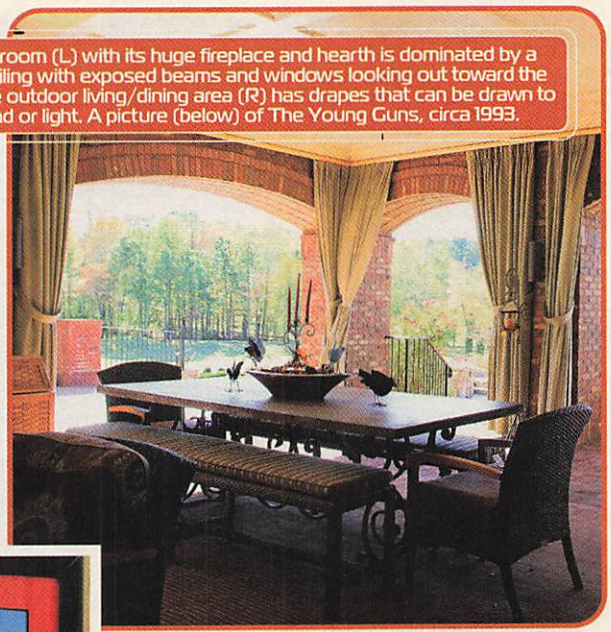
"That's my chair," he said. "If I'm in here, I'm either sitting there with one of my little daughters next to me or lying on the sofa."

A game table that can seat at least six is positioned near a cabinet filled with an assortment of board games.

"My daughters like 'Clue' so we play a lot of that," said John. "But I like 'Monopoly.' My favorite is 'Risk.'"

Double doors from the family room lead to a unique feature, an outdoor living/dining/kitchen area. The space includes a built-in television and outdoor fireplace and full kitchen, complete with a built-in grill. Draperies can be drawn to create "walls" to block wind or light. John says it's become one of his favorite places to sit in the evening, and he envisions using it even more in the future.

Back inside, the kitchen is dominated by a massive, granite-topped island that serves as a place for food preparation, eating and storage. The refrigerator is decoratively hidden behind wooden cabinet doors. John prepared his lunch - two turkey burgers - on a large Thermidor stove top with built-in grill. Two ovens are built into the wall next to the stove. The walls are sage



The family room (L) with its huge fireplace and hearth is dominated by a cathedral ceiling with exposed beams and windows looking out toward the grounds. The outdoor living/dining area (R) has drapes that can be drawn to block wind or light. A picture (below) of The Young Guns, circa 1993.

green, the floors a grey stone, and Mission style lamps overhead provide warm light.

The family has most meals in the window-filled dining alcove just off the kitchen. John's dogs, Brownie and Lilly, both Wheaton Terriers, love to hide between the legs of the sturdy black table.

A nanny suite, children's rooms, and a TV/playroom are found upstairs. Dee Anna Davenport, a long-time family employee, lives in the nanny suite. She manages the house and property, along with other Smoltz family properties, and helps John with chauffeuring children to their various activities.

Andrew has his own bedroom, as does Rachel. Currently, Carly and Kelly are sharing a bedroom while another room is being prepared for Rachel. Then the younger girls will each have their own room with a large shared bathroom.

The walls along the staircase leading to the basement begin to hint that a successful baseball player lives here. Along the hall, several built-in memorabilia cases highlight Smoltz's triumphs on and off the field.

One case holds his 2002 Comeback Player of the Year, the 2002 Marvin Miller Player of the Year, and his 1997 Silver Slugger Award. Another holds his 1992 National League Championship MVP trophy and a collection of caps from post-season play. In one case, a replica of the 1995 World Series trophy is surrounded by caps from World Series and All-Star Games he's participated in, while another holds the prestigious 2005 Major League Baseball Roberto Clemente Award for Community Service. The award is flanked by medals received when John was the Roberto Clemente Award winner for the Braves in 2005 and 2006.

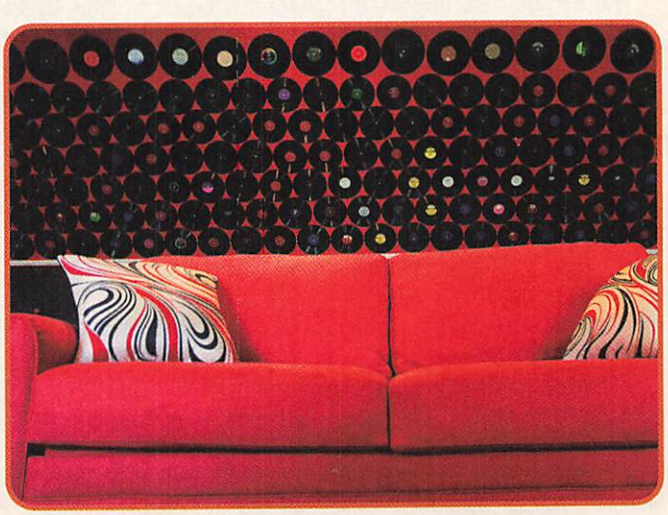
One large case has a photo of John taken at spring training in Florida with his friend, golfer extraordinaire Tiger Woods. The case also holds baseball shoes signed by teammates. "That's something I wish I had done more of," said John. "I wish I'd gotten all my teammates to sign a cleat or something like that."

Hanging in the hall leading to the main basement are framed John Smoltz baseball card sets, all framed by his father, John Sr.

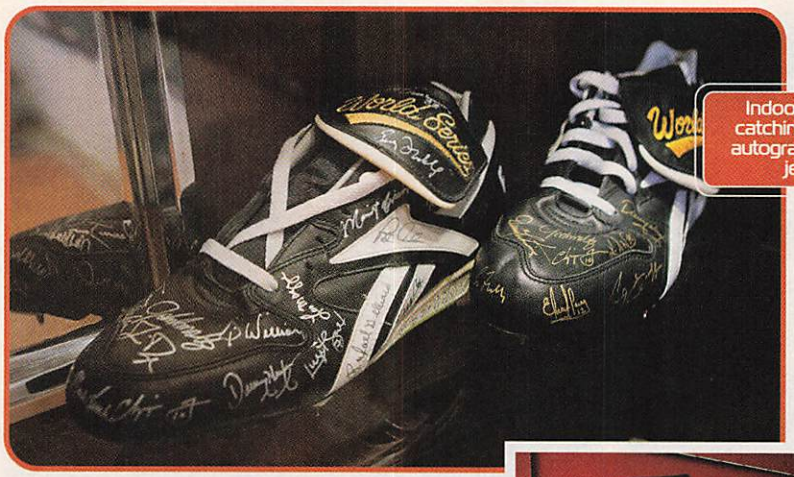
A small weight room on one side of the hall is opposite a billiard room, which instead houses a Ping-Pong table.

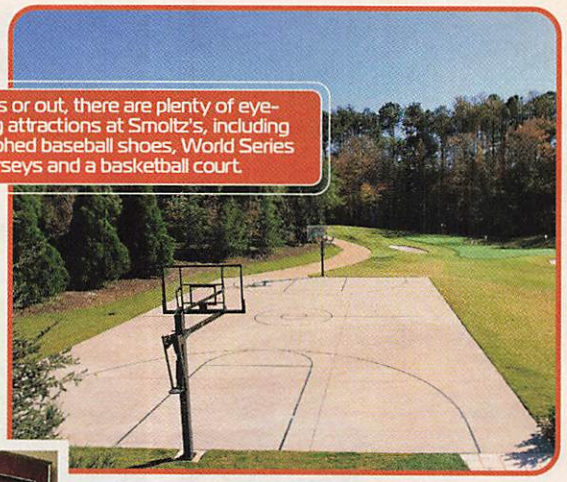
"I love to play Ping-Pong," said John. "Andrew likes to play, too, and he's gotten good." There's another comfortable living room area with large screen television, and another small kitchen with a sliding glass door to the pool deck. The pool, closed for the winter, has a waterfall and a water slide.

On the other side of the basement is one of John's and his children's favorite hangouts, the home theater. Two rows of tan leather recliners face a large screen television. A computer console next to "John's chair" controls lights and volume, as well as what's on the screen - movies, television and X-Box video games. John gives a demonstration of the spectacular clarity of picture and sound by bringing up a musical performance by the Dave Matthews Band.



This music-themed getaway over the garage is decorated with old records on the walls.





Indoors or out, there are plenty of eye-catching attractions at Smoltz's, including autographed baseball shoes, World Series jerseys and a basketball court.

"We added the theater after we moved in," said John. "When I absolutely want to veg out and not care about anything, this is where I spend my time!"

Football watching in the home theater is particularly enjoyable since the screen can be split into four different television screens.

"I can sit here and watch football while managing my fantasy football team on the computer," he said.

The doors to the theater are unique. They're inset with baseballs and have real bats for handles. But there's a catch.

"This goes to show you how concerned I am about details like this," said John. "These are Eli Marrero bats on the door!"

At the time (2004), Smoltz was using former teammate Marrero's bats, but had written his number, "29," on the handle. When the door company asked for the bats, he just pulled them out and handed them over without checking to see if they were "his" model.

"Maybe one of these days I'll change them," John said, unconvincingly.

Famous for his love of golf, Smoltz stores his golf gear in a specially designed room in a free-standing garage next to the house. The golf bag stand is packed with about six sets of clubs, and a unique rack above the stand holds putters and other clubs.

The garage also houses the children's bikes, a John Deere Gator utility vehicle, and a golf cart used to ride around the grounds. The room over the garage was converted into a red, black, and white music-themed getaway. Old records decorate a red-painted wall. An electronic drum kit and keyboard stand in one corner of the room, and tin replica advertising signs decorate the walls. There's also a full bathroom.

"This room is great for the family gatherings," said John. "We bring a couple of beds in so people can sleep up here."

Though it's clear he enjoys the home and the furnishings - and, even more, enjoys sharing it all - it's also obvious that Smoltz would almost always rather be outside, preferably riding his John Deere tractor!

Standing outside, facing away from the house, is the view that first grabbed John's attention - lots of land and, at the time, undeveloped.

"It's a perfect setting," he said. "Everything about this place is geared toward having people over and having fun."

The patio was expanded, creating a series of levels leading down to the pool deck, and the pool itself was renovated and enlarged.

"We added the pond and use it to irrigate the property," said Smoltz.

Though it's difficult to imagine now, much of the grounds were wild when John bought it.

"I pulled vines off those trees out there," he said. "My brother, Mike, helps out a lot with the upkeep. I think we just did our last cut (of grass) the other day."

There are three golf holes, a baseball field, tennis court, basketball court, and a 90-yard football field. The football field is natural grass, but the baseball infield and golf tees are artificial turf. The wind blows in from the outfield of the baseball field.

"I figured if I was building the 'park', it was going to be pitcher friendly," he said. "Jeff Francoeur and Brian McCann can't even hit it out on a calm day!"

"This is where I see the potential," he continued. "I envision hosting neighborhood competitions, father/son, mother/daughter field days, mini-camps, that sort of thing. I know when people hear 'Bible study', they see one type of activity. But when I talk about it, I'm talking about an all-day event."

At a King's Ridge event held in September, Smoltz had a tent installed over the basketball court and called in caterers from Barnacles Seafood Restaurant, where he's an investor.

"We've had events where chefs come in to prepare five-course meals," he said. "We're hosting (an event) in December and still talking about the setup for that. It will depend on the weather how much of the house is used."

Asked whether he's concerned that he, and not the cause, is the draw for these events, John said, "I understand that's an aspect of it, but I don't think it's the only thing for people. Those who know me know that (the house) isn't what's important to me. This house is not even close to who I am. This house is not who I am - it's part of what I'm doing, it's part of my mission."

And that mission, whether it's helping to build a school, supporting a candidate, or feeding the hungry, is inextricably linked to what he considers his greatest work.

"When the dust settles," Smoltz said, "I want to be a hero in my own house. My family and my character is all I have left, and that's what will stand the test of time."

PAINTING THE CORNERS

BY JAY BUSBEE

A GIFT IDEA FOR EVERY PLAYER ON YOUR LIST

AFTER A BASEBALL SEASON that ended too soon and a summer that, at least in Atlanta, went on far too long, we're now in the full throes of the holiday season.

If you're like me, you've got a mile-long list of presents to buy. Obviously, you'll get some good gifts for your family, but what about your favorite baseball team?

You didn't forget your Braves this year, did you?

Fear not. Here's my gift idea list for the Braves. Feel free to pick up any of these you want. Just be sure to enclose a gift card.

Jeff Francoeur - The kids' college fund and a plane ticket to Vegas. Why? Francoeur turned down the Braves' initial contract offer before last season, betting that he was capable of putting together far better numbers than he showed in his first two years. He ended up hitting nearly .300. That's a gambler I'd trust with my money.

The Next Braves Centerfielder - A mitt the size of an auto dealer's American flag. Sorry, fella, but that's the only way you're going to be able to compete with a certain departed center-field icon. A jetpack might not be the worst idea, either. Good luck out there.

Mark Teixeira - Anything he wants. No, really - anything. Want to go fishing at the Georgia Aquarium, Mark? Want Varsity onion rings at a moment's notice? Whatever you desire, it's yours. Just stay and play for Atlanta 'til we're hosting another World Champions parade (or two) down Peachtree Street - excuse me, Teixeira Avenue.

Yunel Escobar - Some SPF 50 sunscreen and a cooler full of chilled bottles of his beverage of choice. With All-Star Edgar Renteria gone, it's going to be awfully hot under the magnifying glass trained on the shortstop position.

New GM Frank Wren - I was going to get him a dartboard with a picture of certain agents' faces on it, but Wren found just such a dartboard waiting for him - already well-used - when he moved into the GM's office.

Peter Moylan - A brand-new Armani tuxedo to attend the Oscars once the newly proposed movie based on his life story becomes a global blockbuster.

ATLANTA BRAVES

Rafael Soriano deserves some "do-over" cards for the times when his usual brilliance is negated by one swing of a bat.

Mets fans - "Second place is the first loser" t-shirts. Hey, never pass up an opportunity to twist the knife.

John Smoltz - A copy of the "Live Free Or Die Hard" DVD, where Bruce Willis destroys half of the Eastern seaboard all by his 50-something self. Not that Smoltz needs more inspiration. But wouldn't it be cool to see him enter the game jumping a motorcycle over the 755 Club?

Matt Diaz - Another, oh, 200 at-bats... And a parking place for the Brinks truck that would follow.

Chipper Jones - A head-to-toe plastic suit made of the same antitank armor that Barry Bonds wears on his elbow. Let's see some Pittsburgh third baseman try to flip Chipper while he's wearing that.

Bobby Cox - A chef from Bone's on call every game, with a grill fired up and ready to throw on a New York Strip as soon as Bobby leaves the dugout. Hey, if the man's going to go to the wall for his team, the least he deserves is a good steak and a cigar when he makes his early exits.

Brian McCann - Packages of stationery reading, "Sorry I sent you to the showers in the second inning" for opposing pitchers. Refills available.

Rafael Soriano - Ten "I'd like a do-over on that pitch, please" cards, to be presented to the umpire whenever one of his usually dominant pitches ends up in the bleachers rather than in McCann's glove.

Kelly Johnson - Part-time jobs with the State Department, the National Institute of Health, and ABC-TV. He picked up the basics and nuances of second base in just a few months. He ought to have a resolution to the Middle East situation, a cure for cancer, and the solution to "Lost" knocked out before spring training rolls around.

Chuck James and Jo-Jo Reyes - A link to Tom Glavine and John Smoltz's pages on baseball-reference.com and a little encouragement. Those two legends didn't exactly light up the league their first two years in the majors.

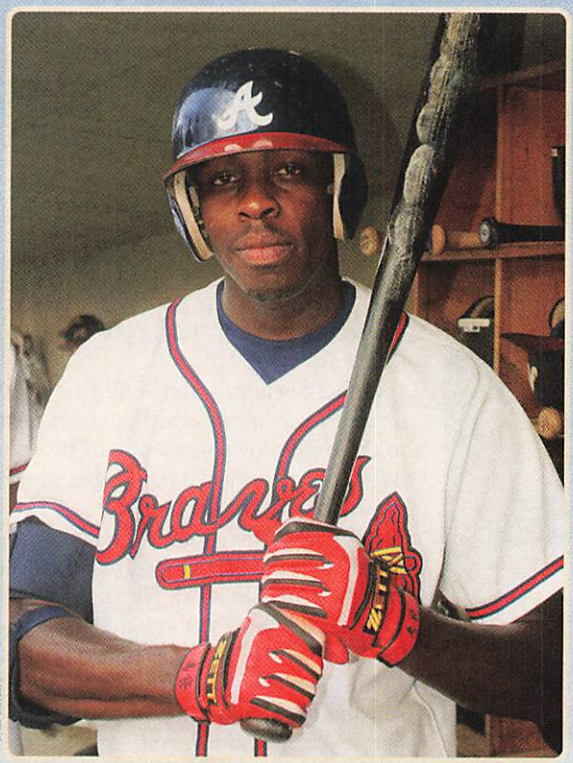
Tim Hudson - A calendar that only has the months April-September 2007. Maybe if we can convince him the 2007 season's still going on, he'll keep smoking the opposition the way he did all last year.

> WANT TO GO FISHING AT THE GEORGIA AQUARIUM, MARK (TEIXEIRA)? WANT VARSITY ONION RINGS AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE?

Skip Caray - An open invitation to come to my house, sit on the front porch, watch the Braves game with the sound off, and announce the game right there. I'll provide the snacks.

Of course, there's one gift that'd be perfect for the whole team. I think you know what I'm talking about - a certain piece of hardware with little flags all over it. One size fits all, and there's no way they'd return it.

Happy holidays, Braves fans!



BILL SETLIFF

Dennis Dixon's baseball stats may not be impressive, but his experience as a Braves farmhand helped elevate him among the elite of college football.

HEISMAN HYPE

THE BRAVES HAVE HAD CY YOUNG WINNERS AND MVPS, but they've never had a Heisman Trophy winner. That could change soon, especially if Oregon quarterback Dennis Dixon is able to lead the University of Oregon Ducks to the national college football championship.

That's because Dixon also is a Braves minor league outfielder. The team's fifth-round pick in last June's draft, Dixon credits the limited experience he got last summer with helping him realize his football potential this fall.

"It helped me a lot," Dixon told ESPN.com about his summer as a Brave. "Baseball is about repetition. I can translate that to football, too. If you go 0-for-3 in baseball, you're still going to get to the plate again. If you have an 0-for-3 series or throw an interception in football, you're going to get another series. If you stoop or hang your head, your teammates are going to see that. If you keep your head up and stay encouraged, they're going to feed off that."

Dixon, who hadn't played baseball since high school, hit .176 with no home runs and seven RBIs in 28 games for the Braves' Gulf Coast and Danville rookie-level teams. However, the Braves believe his athleticism could enable the 6-4, 205-pounder to develop into a major leaguer if he chooses to pursue a baseball career.

At press time, Oregon was ranked No. 2 in the nation. In nine games (8-1), Dixon had completed 67.9 percent of his passes, 20 for touchdowns, and rushed for eight more TDs. He graduates at the end of fall quarter and also is a candidate for Academic All-American.

OWN A PIECE

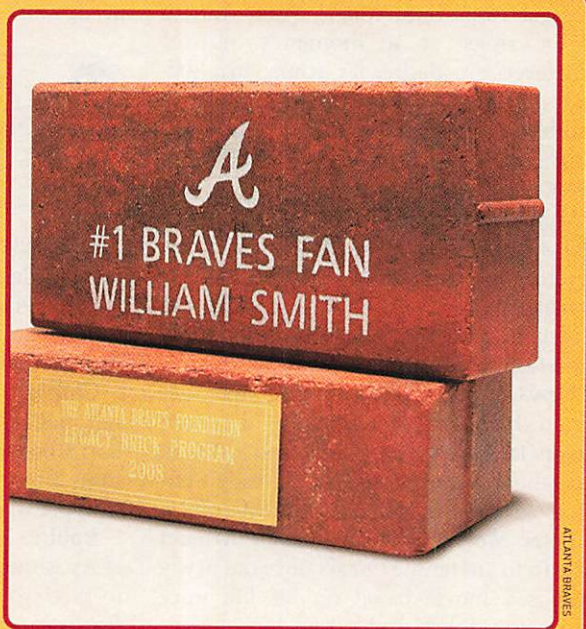
WANT TO OWN A PIECE of Turner Field? Want to see your name displayed near the statues of Hall of Famers Hank Aaron, Phil Niekro, Warren Spahn and Ty Cobb? That's now possible by purchasing an Atlanta Braves Foundation Legacy Brick.

The bricks come inscribed with a personalized message (*all text is subject to approval) and will be set in Monument Grove just outside the main gates of Turner Field. Each purchase includes a complimentary replica brick for display in the home or office.

Legacy Bricks are available at braves.com/bricks or by calling 1-877-ABF-BRIX (223-2749). Gift certificates are available. There are four price options:

- 4" x 8" Brick with a 3-line message - $150.
- 4" x 8" Brick with Braves logo and 2-line message - $175.
- 8" x 8" Brick with a 6-line message - $275.
- 8" x 8" Brick with Braves logo and 4-line message - $325.

*Do not include e-mail addresses, phone numbers, advertising or inappropriate language.



ATLANTA BRAVES

OKLAHOMA!

EVEN THOUGH C.C. SABATHIA of the Cleveland Indians won this year's Warren Spahn Award as the best lefthander in baseball, the awards banquet scheduled Jan. 24 at the Masonic Temple in Guthrie, Okla., is shaping up as a bit of a Braves-fest.

Not only is the award given in honor of the winningest pitcher in Braves history, but the Oklahoma Sports Museum that presents it each year also will honor Tom Glavine and Joe Simpson.

OKLAHOMA SPORTS MUSEUM

Minnesota's Johan Santana won the Spahn Award in 2004 and '06.

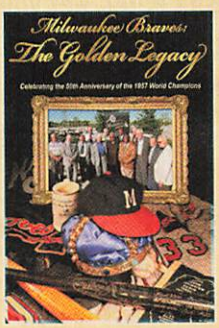
Glavine, still a free agent at press time but rumored for a possible return to the Braves, will receive a custom award crafted just for him in recognition of becoming only the fifth lefthander to enter the 300-win club this past season.

Simpson will receive the organization's Bill Teegins Excellence in Broadcasting Award presented each year to a broadcaster with Oklahoma heritage. Simpson is an Oklahoma native and attended the University of Oklahoma where he was an All-American baseball player.

Call the Oklahoma Sports Museum at (405) 260-1342 for information about tickets to the event.

REMEMBER '57

JUST IN TIME for the holidays comes a DVD commemorating the Milwaukee Braves' 1957 World Championship and that team's reunion this past August. Produced by Bill Povletich for the Milwaukee Braves Historical Association (MBHA), it is available to ship Dec. 1 for $19.95 plus $4.95 shipping/handling at milwaukeebraveshistoricalassociation.com.Milwaukee Braves: The Golden Legacy includes footage from the sold-out reunion banquet where 16 members of the '57 team were honored, interviews with the players who attended the event, a documentary chronicling the building of the '57 team that beat the Yankees in the World Series, highlights from previous MBHA events, and more.



HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

MAKE A ROSIN BAG

BILL SETLIFF

BETWEEN BATTERS or even between pitches, pitchers often grab a rosin bag and cover their hands with the powdery substance inside. While this may just seem like a nervous habit, it serves a purpose. The rosin makes their hands sticky and helps them grip the ball better. Especially on hot days, perspiration can make the smooth ball slippery to handle.

The rosin used by Major League Baseball originally came from Chinese gum trees. Brazilian gum trees were later used. Now, the rosin is taken from trees in Mississippi.

Tanners Inc., a Hot Springs, Arkansas-based company that manufacturers Rawlings baseball accessories, makes two different rosin bags. One, called a rock rosin bag (above with a box of rosin), is considerably larger. It contains more pure gum rosin, and most ballplayers prefer its stickier feel. The smaller rosin bag provides a drier grip. While some baseball players use it, that bag is more popular with bowlers.

"Rosin is like sap from a tree. It is inherently tacky," said Vince Signorelli, general manager for Tanners Inc., which has made rosin bags for 15 years. "At room temperature, 100 percent pure rosin is a solid. It's only under extreme heat that it would melt or break down."

Production starts by running the rosin through a large machine with granite rollers that mills the material. That transforms it into a powdery substance. A diluting material and drying agents are added. The additives prevent it from changing completely back to solid form at room temperature. For the larger rosin bags, one pound apiece of this material is put into bags, then the bags are sealed and sewed together.

Professional teams often modify rosin bags before pitchers use them. They take a white sanitary baseball sock and stuff rosin into the bottom. Then they twist the sock around and pull the open end back through over the wad of rosin. Next they tie it tightly, and cut off the end of the sock with scissors. A bat may be used to help crush solid pieces into powder.

– STEVE FALL

Braves FanFest 2008 is Bigger than Ever

With More Players–More Activities–More Fun

Saturday, January 12th, 10am–6pm | Sunday, January 13th, 10am–5pm

FanFest 2008 is moving indoors to the Georgia World Congress Center. Get your tickets now for a total Braves weekend dedicated to the best fans in the game.

- Meet your favorite current and former Braves players and coaches
- Collect autographs, play interactive games, participate in skill clinics
- Shop for Braves memorabilia and tickets for the 2008 season
- 200,000 sq. feet of space for more activities than ever
- Fun activities for the whole family

Braves FANFEST

Buy tickets at braves.com/fanfest

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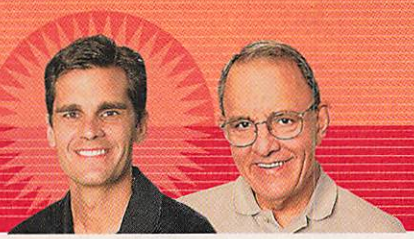


CHANGE IN THIS CAMP ALWAYS LOOKS FAMILIAR

I COULDN'T BE HAPPIER for Frank Wren. I know how tough it is to follow in gigantic footsteps, but I think Frank is going to do a fine job as the Braves' new general manager.

I am especially happy that Wren, who turned down a shot with the Pirates a few years ago in hopes of running the show in Atlanta, was rewarded not just for his patience, but also for the fine work he did the last eight years as assistant GM under John Schuerholz.

John has rightfully gotten the glory for the unprecedented run of success the Braves have enjoyed, but he would also be the first to say that it was truly a team effort. And Frank Wren has been a very big part of that team.

Best of all, I am thrilled that John Schuerholz got to pick the timing of his career move, too. Usually when a new GM takes over, it's at the expense of someone else. John moves upstairs to president, and will still have a huge influence over the organization as it moves forward. As some in baseball have said of the Braves: The more they change, the more they stay the same.

IT DIDN'T TAKE FRANK WREN LONG to pull off his first big deal, did it? I wasn't surprised that the Braves traded Edgar Renteria, but I was surprised that they didn't get a "proven" major league pitcher in return for one of the top hitters and character guys in our, or any, league.

Gorkys Hernandez and Jair Jurrjens are apparently highly-regarded prospects. Hernandez is a speedy leadoff-type outfielder, and Jurrjens may compete for the back of the rotation this spring.

The deal now allows the Braves to play Yunel Escobar every day at his natural position - shortstop. His range and his arm are better than Edgar's at this stage of his career, and let's face it, he's gonna make a lot less money than Renteria makes.

But like the move at the top of the organization, the Braves reward their own. Escobar needs to play every day. He'll get his chance.

Was this a good trade? In the short term, I think it's a wash. I love the professionalism Edgar brought to the clubhouse, and his talent speaks for itself. If Jurrjens makes the club this spring, and Hernandez moves through the system quickly, the deal with Detroit may rival the old Doyle Alexander-for-John Smoltz deal with the Tigers in 1987.

That one, made by a GM named Bobby Cox, worked out pretty well, didn't it? We'll see about this one.

JEFF FRANCOEUR had a pretty good year, didn't he? A .293 average, 19 home runs, 105 RBIs, 42 walks, 19 assists and just five errors. That production earned Jeff his first Rawlings Gold Glove Award. But that's not the only gold Jeff can boast about. He and his lovely girlfriend Catie were married this off-season. Knowing Jeff, it is *that* honor about which he is justifiably most proud. Congratulations!

GOOD NEWS as we look ahead to 2008. Tom Glavine and the Braves may be inching toward a deal. Tommy won his 300th game as a Met in Chicago. I hope he and the Braves can come to terms. He's another true pro's pro - I hope he gets a chance to finish his career where it began, with the Braves.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Skip Caray and Chip Caray alternate months in this space, so watch for Skip in January. Chip will be back here in February.

Another lefty is getting ready, too. Mike Hampton is rehabbing, and getting some starts under his belt in Mexico.

It's still a long way back to the big leagues, but give Hampton credit. He could have sat back and called it a career. But being the competitor he is, he wants to pitch again.

A healthy Hampton, along with Tim Hudson, Smoltz, Glavine, Chuck James, and Jo-Jo Reyes have Braves fans everywhere looking forward to pitchers and catchers reporting to Disney's Wide World of Sports complex in mid-February.

I'll see you in Orlando!

KYB KNOW YOUR BRAVES

YUNEL ESCOBAR #19

2007 STATISTICS

AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
.326	94	319	54	104	25	0	5	28	27	44	5

BASICS

FULL NAME	YUNEL ESCOBAR
POSITION	Infielder
VITALS	Bats/Throws ... Right/Right Height ... 6-2 Weight ... 200 Age ... 25
BORN	November 2, 1982 Havana, Cuba
CONTRACT	Eligible for renewal.
ACQUIRED	Selected by the Braves in second round of the 2005 draft (75th overall.)
PERSONAL	Married (Minerva).

CAREER

EARLY INDICATORS
Named to the World roster for the 2006 Futures All-Star Game and won the 2006 batting title (.407) in the Arizona Fall League.

WILD RIDE
Escaped from Cuba to the U.S. on a two-day journey with no food or water aboard a 25-foot boat with 35 other refugees in 2004.

GRAND THEFT
Stole second base in the ninth inning at Arizona July 27 this year while pitcher Jose Valverde was holding the ball and not paying attention to him.

CHILDHOOD CONNECTION
Grew up as a friend of reserve catcher Brayan Pena, who fled Cuba in 2000 and advised the Braves about his buddy after signing with the team.

PHOTO

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

"Just married!"

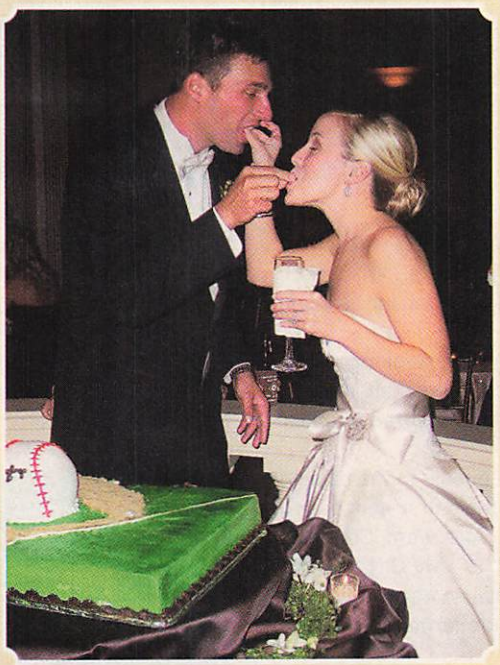
An Exclusive Inside Visit To the Fabulous Wedding Of Jeff and Catie Francoeur

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN

JEFF FRANCOEUR wed his longtime girlfriend, Catie McCoy, in an evening ceremony, Saturday, Nov. 3, at Peachtree Presbyterian Church in the Buckhead section of Atlanta. The days leading up to and including the ceremony and reception that followed were filled with personal touches offering tribute to their families, their friends, and baseball.

The nuptial weekend began with a Thursday night rehearsal dinner held at Turner Field's 755 Club. Guests were treated to tours of the ballpark, clubhouse and field. A large banner congratulating Jeff and Catie hung in the stadium. After the rehearsal dinner, a limousine picked up the couple, their attendants and dates, for an evening of bachelor/bachelorette partying throughout Atlanta.

On Friday, the Francoeur and McCoy families joined for a family golf tournament at Mystery Valley Golf Course in Lithonia, followed by a catered family dinner featuring food from the Varsity, an Atlanta drive-through restaurant institution, famous for their hot dogs, onion rings and frosted orange drinks.



PATTY RASMUSSEN

Jeff and Catie, who met when they were in elementary school, sample the baseball-themed groom's cake.

Saturday, the wedding day, was a Chamber of Commerce dream - clear skies, cool autumn temperatures and colorful autumn foliage. Music from a huge pipe organ filled the church as the 500 guests filed into the sanctuary for the 6 p.m. ceremony.

Among the guests were John Smoltz, Chipper Jones and Kelly Johnson, with his fiancée Lauren Thacker. Former Braves teammates attending included Andruw Jones and his wife, Nicole, and Adam LaRoche with wife, Jenn. Braves coaches were represented as well, including Chino Cadahia and wife, Lynne, Terry Pendleton and wife, Catherine, Brian Snitker and wife, Ronnie, and Myrtle Beach Pelicans manager Rocket Wheeler.

Other Braves personnel in attendance included president John Schuerholz and his wife, Karen, general manager Frank Wren with wife, Terri, director of team travel and equipment manager Bill Acree and wife, Cindy, assistant clubhouse and equipment managers Ben Acree and Chris Van Zant with his wife, Katie, director of baseball operations Paul Snyder and wife, Petie, director of scouting Roy Clark, baseball systems operator and bullpen catcher Alan Butts with his wife, Tammy, and video coordinator Rob Smith and wife, Carmen.

Two of Francoeur's teammates, Brian McCann and Clint Sammons, served as groomsmen.

After the seating of grandmothers and mothers, Jeff and his best man, brother D.J., walked in and took their place at the foot of the altar. The wedding party entered, one by one, to a guitar rendition of the hymn "Fairest Lord Jesus." Francoeur either shook hands, hugged, or knuckle-bashed the groomsmen as they walked past. When his sister and bridesmaid, Heather Karvis, walked past, he kissed her on the cheek. Finally, as the organ played "Come Thou Fount," Catie walked in on the arm of her father, Malcolm McCoy.

The ceremony itself was very traditional. Family members and friends read passages of scripture and prayers for both Jeff and Catie. After the vows and exchange of rings, the marriage received a final benediction, and the pastor told Jeff he could kiss his bride. The congregation cheered as the couple was presented and walked down the aisle. Afterward, while the wedding party assembled at the altar for photos, many of the out-of-town family boarded a chartered bus to go to the reception, held at the Biltmore Ballrooms in Midtown Atlanta. In a move to preserve the privacy of the reception from potential wedding crashers, guests were asked to present their pre-printed admittance cards, received several weeks prior to the wedding, at the door.

Both ballrooms and the entrance hall were used for the reception. One ballroom offered a live band and dance floor, as well as several food stations. The second ballroom also featured food stations, Jeff's groom's cake, and a slide show of Jeff and Catie, which ran throughout the evening.

The couple's five-tiered wedding cake stood in the center of the

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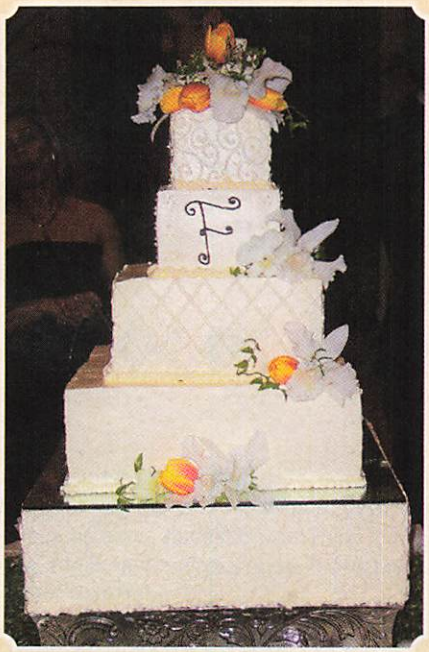


PHOTOS: PATTY RASMUSSEN

The five-tiered wedding cake was barely large enough to satisfy this crowd of hungry Braves and former Braves, (L-R) Kelly Johnson, Andruw Jones, Terry Pendleton, Brian McCann, Adam LaRoche and Chipper Jones.

entrance hall, flanked on either side by trees hung with small decorative crosses for guests to take as souvenirs. Written on the back of each cross was the message, "Thank you for blessing our lives, Jeff and Catie, 11-3-2007."

Meanwhile, on the Biltmore balcony overlooking West Peachtree Street, two members of the catering staff created homemade pralines that were individually personalized in paper wraps.

The wedding party was introduced to the guests in the packed dance floor ballroom. Jeff and Catie took their first dance to "I Could Not Ask For More," by Edwin McCain. Afterward, Catie and her father took a turn on the dance floor to "My Girl" by The Temptations, and finally Jeff danced with his mother, Karen, to "I'm Everything I Am Because of You," made famous by Celine Dion.

Once those formalities were completed, the dance floor was open for business. Perhaps practicing for his son Brian's wedding in December, Howie McCann cut loose on the dance floor. Most Braves players in attendance stayed to themselves, preferring to keep the focus on the newlyweds.

"We were married in this same room, five years ago," said Nicole Jones, standing with Andruw in the ballroom.

The cake cutting took place around 10 p.m. First the couple cut the beautiful wedding cake - carrot cake with cream cheese icing - and enjoyed a champagne toast. Then they made their way to the groom's cake, shaped and decorated to look like a baseball diamond with a large cake baseball, complete with Rawlings logo, in the center.

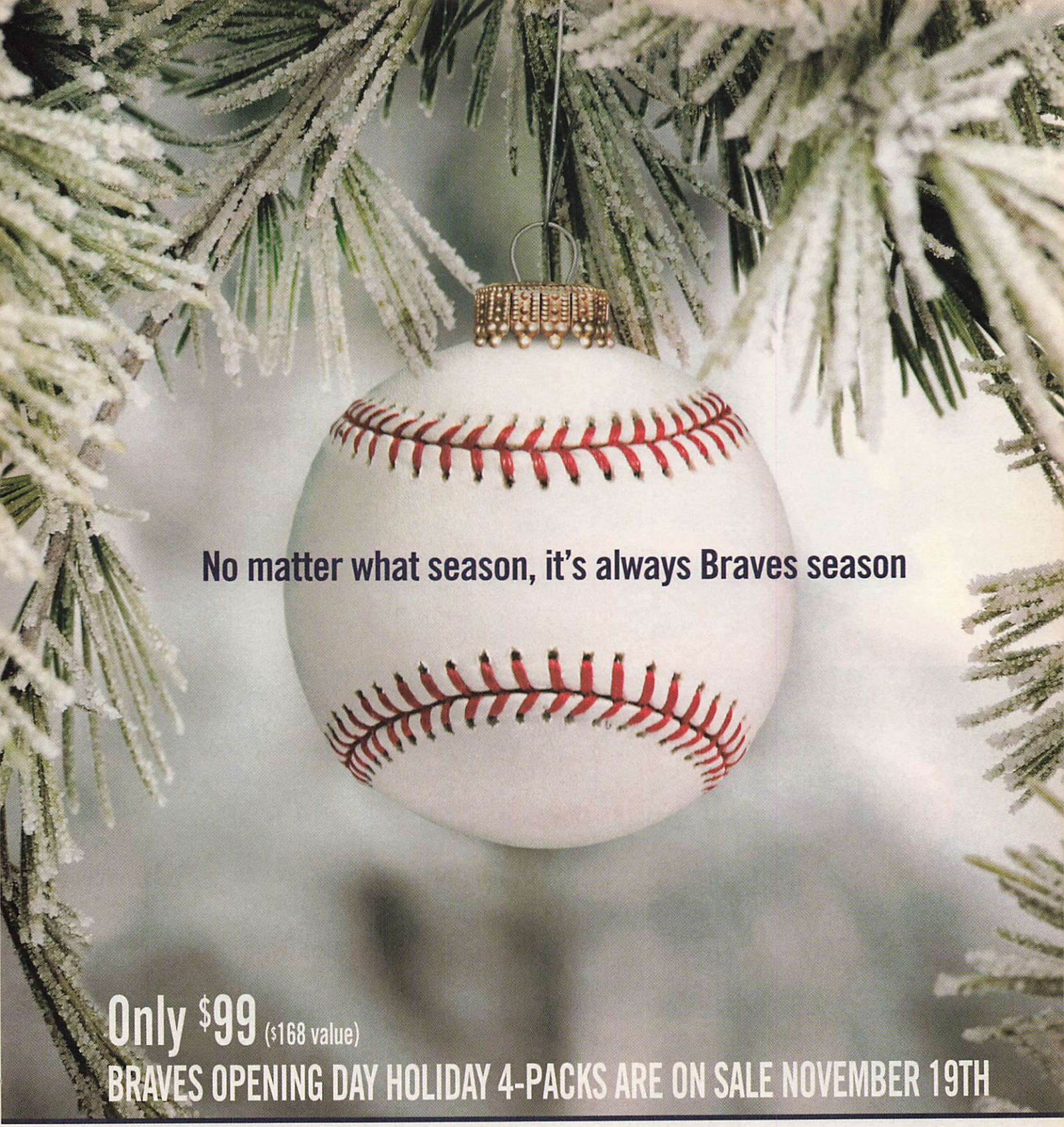
After more dancing and greeting friends and family, the couple left the reception at 11:30 p.m. for their 11-day honeymoon. Jeff planned a trip starting with several days at the Four Seasons Hotel in Punta Mita, Mexico, followed by a week at the Atlantis resort in the Bahamas.

"It was a great day! Everything went off without a hitch," said Jeff, 23. "We were surrounded by our families and some of our best friends. We have a great honeymoon planned. It's going to be really relaxing and special."

"It was a wonderful week," said Catie. "The weather was beautiful all week leading up to the wedding, and it was so much fun having the party at Turner Field. We were so glad to share this with so many of our family and friends."

Jeff and Catie make their home in Duluth, a northern suburb of Atlanta, not far from where they first met when they were in elementary school.

The 500 guests at the reception were able to take home decorative crosses with a message from the bride and groom as a memento of the occasion.


No matter what season, it's always Braves season
Only $99 ($168 value)
BRAVES OPENING DAY HOLIDAY 4-PACKS ARE ON SALE NOVEMBER 19TH

The holiday ticket package comes with tickets* to 4 games including Opening Day. Plus, two adult one day passes to the 2008 Braves FanFest and a voucher for a gift, sent in a commemorative Braves holiday envelope.

March 31 VS Pittsburgh Pirates April 5 VS New York Mets May 3 VS Cincinnati Reds May 17 VS Oakland A's

*Two Upper Box seats

Give the gift of Braves baseball. For tickets call 404.577.9100 or visit braves.com/holiday

Braves

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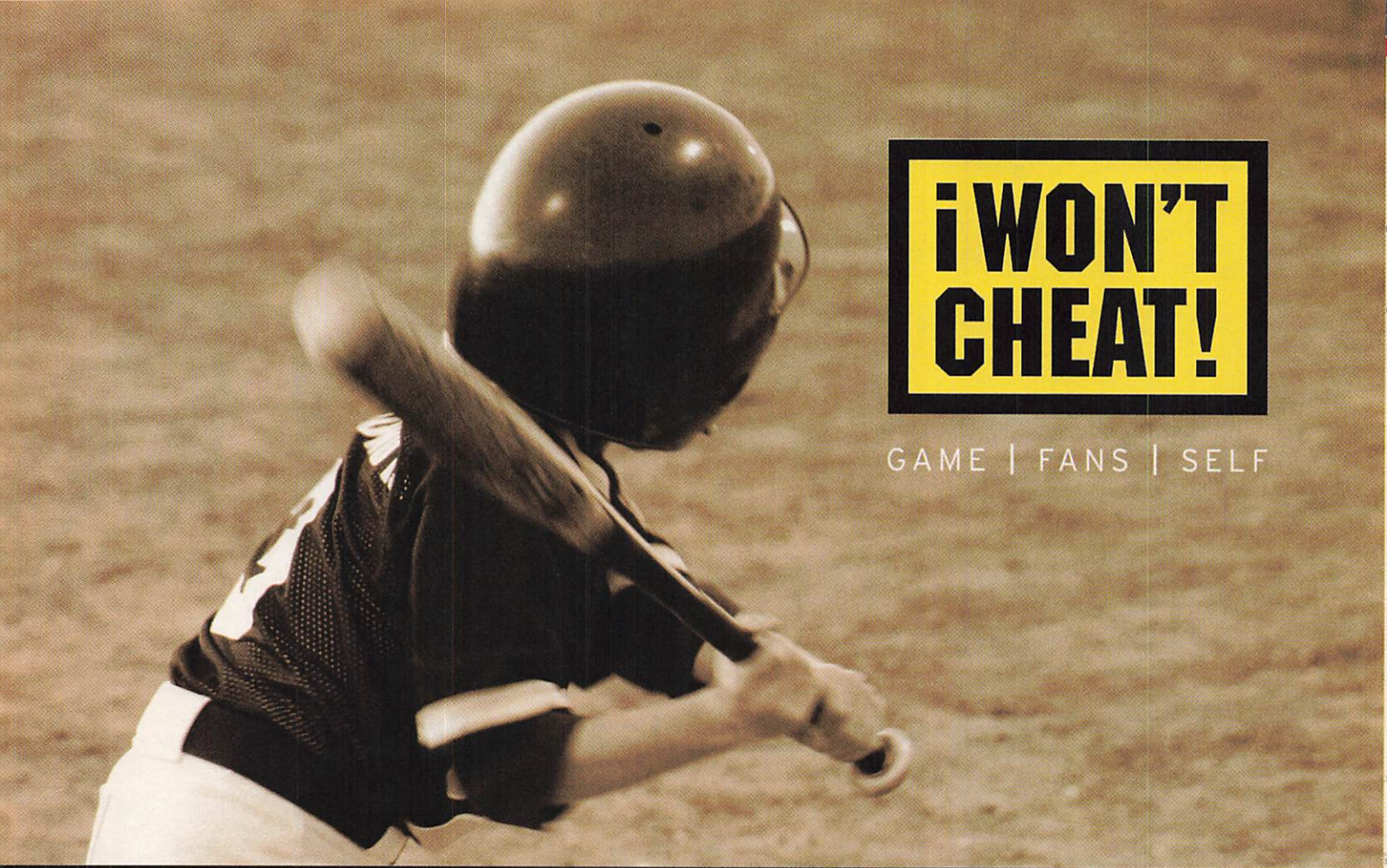
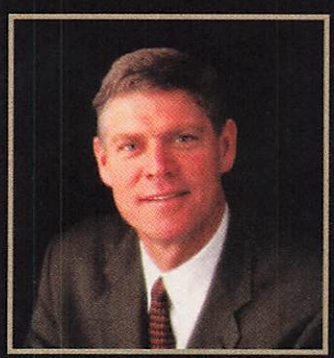


i WON'T CHEAT!

GAME | FANS | SELF



"Youth athletes who feel the pressure to cheat have been damaged the most by the steroid problem. Let's work together to create a drug free atmosphere in sports."

–Dale Murphy

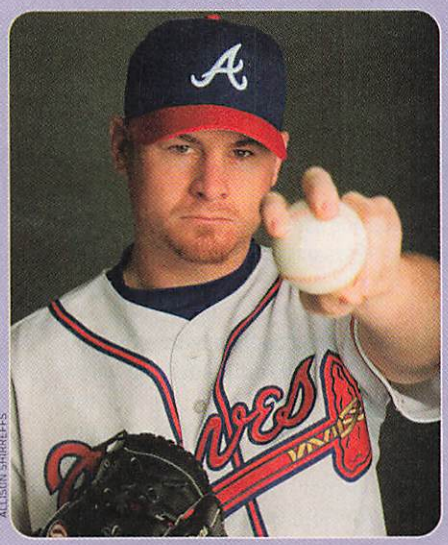
2 TIME NL MVP, ATLANTA BRAVES

FOUNDER OF THE I WON'T CHEAT FOUNDATION

www.iwontcheat.com

PLAYING PEPPER

CHUCK JAMES



ALLISON SHIRREFFS

Though he was plagued by shoulder soreness and the home run ball (32) in '07, James made 30 starts, third on the team.

INTERVIEW BY JAY BUSBEE

CHOPTALK After a great rookie year (11-4, 3.78), you hovered around .500 for most of this season, finishing at 11-10. Do you consider 2007 a disappointment?

CHUCK JAMES It was definitely a disappointment. I feel like I could have been much better, much more competitive. The problems that I had with my shoulder are over now, and I can start to look to next season.

CT How's your shoulder feeling?

JAMES Much better. At the end of the season, they found a small tear in my rotator cuff, which really surprised me. I always thought that if you did something like tearing your rotator cuff, there'd be all kinds of pain. It was sore, but it wasn't as bad as I would have expected.

CT Are you going to have surgery on it?

JAMES No, there's no surgery necessary. It's almost healed. It takes four to six weeks to heal, and then I'll go into rehab for it.

CT: How soon will you start pitching again?

JAMES That's up to the trainers. I don't usually pick up a ball before New Year's Day anyway. And in the majors, you've got even more leeway. With our early throwing program at Turner Field, you've got plenty of time to get ready for spring training.

CT What was the most frustrating aspect of 2007?

JAMES Pretty much everything. The injuries, mostly. When I'd have a problem with my shoulder or my neck, it would change my delivery, and then I'd have to figure out what I was doing wrong and how to get back to pitching right. Every time I'd correct one problem, something else would go wrong.

CT On the positive side, though, what was your best game of the year?

JAMES Probably that last game against Florida (7 IP, 2 H, 6 SO, 1 BB in 5-1 win on Sept. 19). I had good games against Pittsburgh, too (13 IP, 3 H in two games). Those were the games where every pitch was exploding the way it should.

CT You gave up a fair number of first-inning runs. How will you be approaching games differently next year right from the start?

JAMES I'm pretty much going to forget about this year, or treat it as a learning experience. Once I can get healthy, I know I can pitch a lot better than I showed at times last year. But I don't want to overanalyze too much. When you start picking apart every little piece of your delivery, no good can come of that.

CT You're fast becoming one of the veterans of the pitching staff. What will you tell a guy like Jair Jurrjens (acquired from Detroit in the Edgar Renteria deal), coming into the Atlanta clubhouse for the first time?

JAMES The best way to come in is to remember that this is the same game, so have fun playing it. You never know how long you're going to be here, so you need to enjoy it.

Having fun here is so important. Yeah, there are better hitters and better pitchers than in the minors, but you wouldn't be here if you didn't have the talent. You know how to play the game, so it's a matter of learning how to deal with everything else that comes with being in the majors.

CT By "everything else," you mean the media, the publicity?

JAMES Yeah. In the minors, you might get one guy from one newspaper asking you questions. It's not that big of a deal. Here, you've got media all over the place. And in the minors, you might be playing in front of six thousand fans, if you're lucky. Here, you can walk out and be in front of 50,000. That's a fun experience, though. You've got to remember that.

CT What did you learn from this year's pennant drive?

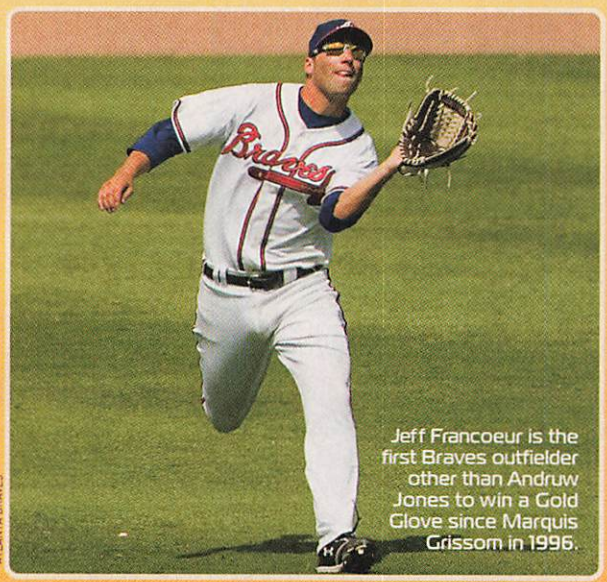
JAMES I learned a lot. This was definitely a good learning year for me. I've never had so many struggles in my career, never had to fight to throw as many strong innings.

I learned that I definitely need to increase my longevity. I was throwing so much, before games and between starts. Over the course of the year, that began to wear and tear on me. Next year, I'm going to throw a little less so that I'll have a little more once we get to the end of the season.

> "AT THE END OF THE SEASON, THEY FOUND A SMALL TEAR IN MY ROTATOR CUFF, WHICH REALLY SURPRISED ME."

CT This spring training will be a little different for you since you're already expected to be a member of the rotation, won't it?

JAMES Well, you never know. I didn't have a strong year. I've still got [minor-league] options left. I know we'll be trying to bring in a new pitcher, and Hampton will be coming back. I'll go into spring training expecting to compete for a job. If I start taking it for granted, I'm a lot more likely to lose it.


ATLANTA BRAVES

Jeff Francoeur is the first Braves outfielder other than Andruw Jones to win a Gold Glove since Marquis Grissom in 1996.

GOLDEN BOY

JEFF FRANCOEUR WAS TABBED "The Natural" by Sports Illustrated during his rookie season. Perhaps "Golden Boy" is more appropriate now after Francoeur won his first Rawlings Gold Glove for fielding excellence.

Francoeur, 23, played in all 162 games last year, making just five errors in 351 chances. He also had 19 assists, tied for the NL lead among outfielders with the Cubs' **Alfonso Soriano** and for the major league lead with Minnesota's **Michael Cuddyer**.

Due to a tie in the voting by managers and coaches before the end of the season, Francoeur was one of four NL outfielders to win a Gold Glove. The others are **Andruw Jones**, **Carlos Beltran** of the Mets and **Aaron Rowand** of the Phillies. It was the 10th straight Gold Glove for Jones, who is a free agent.

Among the other winners was former Braves pitcher **Greg Maddux**, who picked up his record 17th Gold Glove.

RENTERIA TRADED

In order to clear a lineup spot for **Yunel Escobar**, the Braves traded **Edgar Renteria** to Detroit Oct. 29 and received two highly regarded prospects in return. Renteria finished fourth in the NL batting race (.332), but he would have been entering the last year of his contract. The bigger factor, however, was Escobar's impressive emergence as rookie when he hit .326.

The Braves acquired speedy outfielder **Gorkys** (pronounced GOR-keys) **Hernandez** and righthander **Jair Jurrjens** (pronounced JEYE-air JER-jens), who immediately rank as two of the organization's best prospects (see pages 45-46).

Hernandez, 20, was named MVP of the Class-A Midwest League last year, his first full season of pro ball. He led the league with 54 steals and batted .293 with 84 runs, 25 doubles, four home runs and 50 RBIs in 124 games to help West Michigan win the league championship. In 533 plate appearances, he grounded into only two double-plays. Managers voted him the league's most exciting player.

Jurrjens, 21, was 7-5 with a 3.20 ERA in 19 starts at Double-A Erie in 2007 before making his major league debut with Detroit in August. He made seven starts for the Tigers and was 3-1 with a 4.70 ERA. He is regarded as a candidate for the Atlanta starting rotation in 2008. In 502 2/3 career minor league innings, he has a 3.20 ERA with 404 strikeouts and 121 walks.

WHO'S IN THE PEN?

In an apparent tradeoff of potential right-handed bullpen contributors for next season, the Braves claimed **Chris Resop** off waivers from the Angels and designated **Chad Paronto** for assignment Oct. 25.

Resop, 25, was converted from an outfielder to a pitcher by the Marlins prior to the 2003 season and made his big league debut on June 28, 2005. He's appeared in 41 career games for the Marlins (2005-06) and the Angels (2007). His career record is 3-2 with a 5.48 ERA.

The 6-3, 215-pounder appeared in 27 games at Triple-A Salt Lake last year, going 1-3 with a 4.57 ERA in 45 1/3 innings. He pitched in four games for the Angels this past season, then underwent a procedure to have dead tissue removed from his elbow on Aug. 24. He has completed rehab on the elbow.

Paronto, 32, pitched in 41 games for the Braves in 2007 and went 3-1 with a 3.57 ERA.

TRACKING LEFTIES

How about a 2008 rotation that includes **John Smoltz**, **Tim Hudson**, **Tom Glavine** and **Mike Hampton**? It's not out of the question, according to new GM **Frank Wren**, who said the Braves are talking to Glavine about a possible return and also that Hampton was to begin pitching Nov. 20 for the Navojoa Mayans in the Mexican Pacific (winter) League. Hampton, entering the final year of his contract, has missed the last two seasons due to arm surgery and extensive rehab.

WINNER OF A NAME

When the Braves report to spring training at Disney's Wide World of Sports in February, they'll be playing in a new ballpark. Well, maybe not entirely new, but it has a new name. On Oct. 31, Walt Disney Parks and Resorts announced a 10-year alliance with apparel company Hanesbrands, Inc., that includes naming rights for the baseball stadium at Disney. It will be called Champion Stadium beginning in January. The Champion brand of sportswear is part of Hanesbrands.

SHORT HOPS

- The Braves announced that the entire coaching staff will return for next season.
- With the retirement of Houston's **Craig Biggio**, **John Smoltz** becomes the active player with the longest service time who's spent his entire career with the same team. He debuted with the Braves on July 23, 1988.

CONTRACT TRACKER

SIGNED (through)

Mike Hampton, LHP (2008)
Tim Hudson, RHP (2009*)
Chipper Jones, 3B (2008+)
Brian McCann, C (2012#)
John Smoltz, RHP (2008@)
* Club option for 2010 + Option for 2009
# Option for 2013 @ Option for 2009, team option for 2010

ELIGIBLE FOR FREE AGENCY

Octavio Dotel, RHP
Julio Franco, 1B
Andruw Jones, CF
Ron Mahay, LHP
Chris Woodward, INF

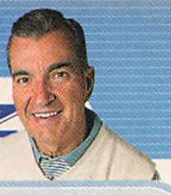
ELIGIBLE FOR ARBITRATION

Lance Cormier, RHP
Matt Diaz, OF
Mike Gonzalez, LHP
Willie Harris, OF
Rafael Soriano, RHP
Mark Teixeira, 1B (2008)
Oscar Villarreal, RHP
Tyler Yates, RHP

UNSIGNED

(Less than 3 years service; eligible for renewal)
Manny Acosta, RHP
Jose Ascanio, RHP
Willy Aybar, INF
Jeff Bennett, RHP
Gregor Blanco, OF
Blaine Boyer, RHP
Buddy Carlyle, RHP
Joey Devine, RHP
Yunel Escobar, SS
Jeff Francoeur, OF
Chuck James, LHP
Kelly Johnson, 2B
Brandon Jones, OF
Jair Jurrjens, RHP
Anthony Lerew, RHP
Peter Moylan, RHP
Pete Orr, INF
Brayan Pena, C
Martin Prado, INF
Chris Resop, RHP
Jo-Jo Reyes, LHP
Royce Ring, LHP
Clint Sammons, C
Phil Stockman, RHP
Scott Thorman, 1B

JOHN
SCHUERHOLZ
PRESIDENT



THE TIMING OF THIS CHANGE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN BETTER

EDITOR'S NOTE

John Schuerholz has contributed a regular column to ChopTalk since the first issue - January 1994. Due to his promotion to president, he asked to write one final column to explain the change in his duties and then this space - like the key to the general manager's office - will be turned over to his successor as GM, Frank Wren.

THE GOOD THING IS I'M STILL HERE. My office just moves next door to the one I've been in. This is quite an honor. I will be engaged in all facets of operations, not specifically and solely baseball.

I spent 26 years as a general manager. I'm going to say it's likely that length of service is not going to be experienced by many others who come into this business. It's a great job, exhilarating and challenging, but it takes its toll.

I did it for 26 wonderful years, and I couldn't be more blessed by the great experiences I had and all the great people I met in all areas of the game. I made a lot of dear friends, and the good thing is that I'm still in it.

While I'm not a general manager, I'll be there as a resource for the general manager when he wants to discuss ideas, which we've already done. Frank and I have had a number of very healthy conversations. We have an open dialogue.

I am not a closet general manager. I am the president who happens to have spent the bulk of my 42 years in baseball in player personnel. I'm available for any questions he may want answered or to be a sounding board.

I'll still be able to find my way into the clubhouse on occasion and to spring training periodically. I have a pulse that still beats with the sounds and smells of baseball.

> "I AM NOT A CLOSET GENERAL MANAGER. I AM THE PRESIDENT WHO HAPPENS TO HAVE SPENT THE BULK OF MY 42 YEARS IN BASEBALL IN PLAYER PERSONNEL."

Now I'm just as excited about the next opportunity and the challenges of working closely with the business aspects of the company, as well as with Frank on baseball. I have a spring in my step, and I am excited about this.

I am terribly honored by the fact that (chairman) Terry McGuirk initiated this months ago. He planted the seed half a year ago, and it's been discussed on and off before we finally moved ahead with it.

I think it's good not only for me and my career, as a 67-year-old with 42 years of experience, but also good for the organization. I'm honored and proud that he felt it was fitting to say: We appreciate what you've done and admire what you've accomplished, and there's no better way to celebrate that than to ask you to take on the most important role in the daily operation of the franchise in the position of president and also be available with your player personnel expertise.

It was perfect timing of the opportunity and desire on my part and of having the right staff prepared to move forward and carry on the responsibilities of baseball operations. I feel that it will be a seamless and smooth transition.

I'm the president and have new responsibilities, and Frank is the general manager with complete authority to do what he thinks is best for the team and organization. In my job as president, I have final authority in baseball operations as in any area, but my style is to have people who are talented and have your trust, and you support them, let them do their jobs and don't do it for them.

I've been able to find talented, committed professionals who want to work hard and succeed. I say: Here's what I want you to do. Go get 'em. And I will do the same in this job. I find that those talented, committed professionals work better with that empowerment and support, with very little interference. That's been my basic theory my entire career.

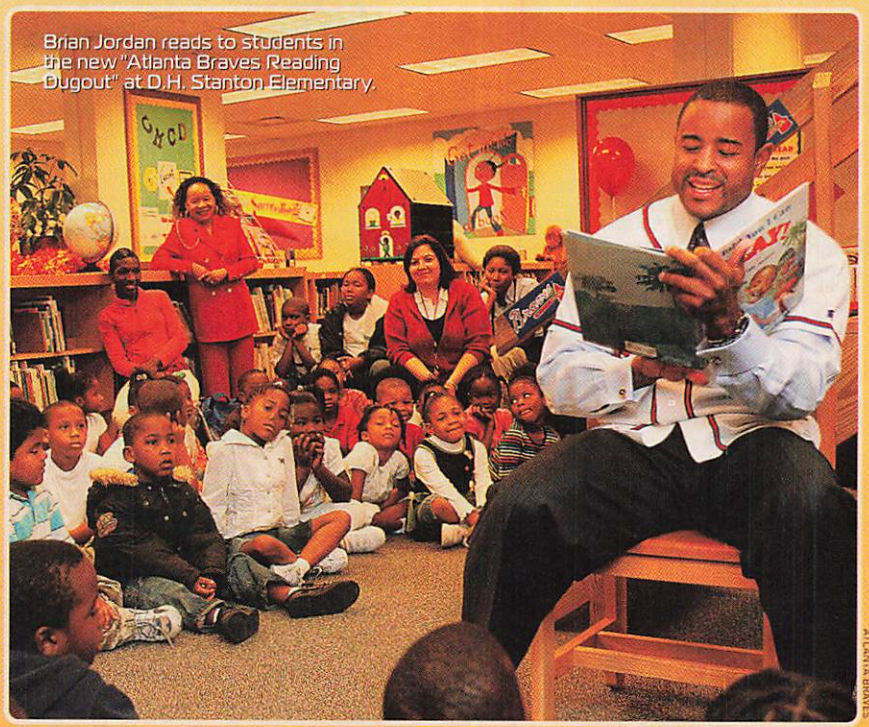
BOOKIN' IT

FORMER BRAVES OUTFIELDER **Brian Jordan** (1999-2001, '05-06) joined Braves mascot Homer and 100 students (K-2nd) and parents at D.H. Stanton Elementary School Oct. 19 for a "Books and Breakfast" event to unveil the new "Atlanta Braves Reading Dugout."

Jordan read excerpts from his book, "I Told You I Can Play" and breakfast was served. The Braves and the Atlanta Journal-Constitution donated 500 books collected this season at Turner Field, and copies of ChopTalk were added to the area.

The purpose of the event and the presence of the Braves-themed reading area is to encourage students to read and also to encourage parental involvement.

The school is located less than a mile from Turner Field, and the Braves have a long-term commitment to help improve student achievement.



Brian Jordan reads to students in the new "Atlanta Braves Reading Dugout" at D.H. Stanton Elementary.

ATLANTA BRAVES

FANFEST IS COMING

The first Braves FanFest to be held outside Turner Field is scheduled Jan. 12-13 at the Georgia World Congress Center. The Saturday session is from 10 a.m.-6 p.m., and the Sunday session is 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Typically, FanFest includes player appearances and autograph opportunities, along with games and activities for the entire family. The Braves will be producing it along with Urban Expositions. Plans call for an Atlanta Baseball Players Show & Conference to be part of the experience (separate admission is required). Equipment manufacturers, training aids, and camps are likely to be exhibitors, along with baseball memorabilia dealers and much more.

The World Congress Center is located in downtown Atlanta at 285 Andrew Young International Blvd., adjacent to the CNN Center and only two miles from Turner Field.

Tickets for FanFest are available at Braves.com/FanFest, the Turner Field box office, by calling 1-800-326-400, and at TicketMaster locations. Two-day passes purchased in advance are $18 for adults and $12 for children 12 and under. The walkup price is $20 and $15. One-day passes are $12 and $8 in advance and $15 and $10 at the gate. There will be no other charge for any activities - including autographs. Hours are 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m.-5 p.m. on Sunday.

AROUND THE OFFICE

Bruce Manno was hired as assistant general manager Oct. 22. It was the first staff appointment by **Frank Wren**, who was promoted to general manager from assistant GM (see pages 29-31) Oct. 11 at the same time that **John Schuerholz** was elevated from general manager to team president (see pages 26-28).

Manno, 53, spent the last six years with the St. Louis Cardinals, most recently as senior director of pro scouting and special assistant to the GM. From 2002-06, he was the Cardinals' director of player development.

Manno also was Baltimore's assistant GM (1999) and worked in the Brewers' front office for 16 years, from 1979-94. While he was Milwaukee's farm director and assistant GM, the franchise won an "organization of the year" award five times in seven seasons. An Ohio native, he began his baseball career in 1977 as assistant GM at Utica, N.Y., in the New York-Penn League.

The Braves also announced two-year contract extensions with **Kurt Kemp**, director of player development, **Roy Clark**, director of scouting, and **Johnny Almaraz**, director of Latin American operations.

IN THE GAME!

The Braves are building a high-end club behind home plate that reportedly will have seats closer to home plate than those at any other major league stadium. Some of the seats will be closer to the plate (43 feet) than the pitcher (60 feet, six inches).

The Turner Field Dugout Club is expected to be ready for Opening Day (Mar. 31). Only multi-season commitments, priced from $15,000 to $25,000 per seat, per year, will be accepted.

Because the seats are so close to the plate, special approval from Major League

Baseball was required. Fans in the club will have access to many high-end amenities, including food and beverage selections and valet parking.

ONLINE EXPERT

Frank Fultz, who has been the Braves' strength and conditioning coach since 1992, signed with MySportVideos.com to be a baseball expert to provide training and conditioning knowledge to young athletes. The web site is a free online media sharing and networking resource dedicated to young athletes, ages 8-18, to track and share their sports achievements and videos. It is billed as the first web site of its kind. Fultz's "sports conditioning program" will be designed to help youngsters prepare for competition and avoid injury. There will be instructional video clips, interviews and interactive sessions with Fultz, who holds a masters degree in physical education/exercise physiology from Utah State and a doctorate in health science from the University of Utah.

VOICES OF DISTINCTION

Braves Hall of Famers **Ernie Johnson**, **Skip Caray** and **Pete Van Wieren**, along with **Joe Simpson** and **Chip Caray**, are nominees for the 2008 **Ford C. Frick** Award, which recognizes excellence in baseball broadcasting. The winner will be enshrined, alongside other broadcast legends, in "Scribes & Mikemen" exhibit of the National Baseball Hall of Fame library. Fans can determine three of the 10 finalists by voting online at baseballhall.org through Nov. 30.

The award, named after the late Frick, a broadcaster, National League president, commissioner, and Hall of Famer, has been given annually since 1978. It is presented during the Hall of Fame induction ceremony. The final ballot of 10 candidates will be announced in early December, and will include the three fan selections and seven candidates determined by a Hall of Fame staff research team. The Frick electorate that includes past winners and six historians appointed by the Hall of Fame will select the winner.

BALLS & STRIKES

John Schuerholz and **Jeff Francoeur** spoke to the Greater Augusta (Ga.) Fellowship of Christian Athletes banquet and rally at Warren Baptist Church Oct. 23.

BOBBY COX

MANAGER

WE HOPE TO FILL THE GAP IN CENTER FOR ONE YEAR

I SPENT A FEW DAYS IN MID-NOVEMBER in Arizona with our new general manager, Frank Wren. We met with (pitching coach) Roger McDowell to take a look at Mike Hampton. Mike threw a side session for us before he went to Navojoa, Mexico, to pitch in winter ball.

Everything I heard about Mike's progress was that he was throwing well and would be ready to pitch in spring training. I'm not sure how many starts he's going to get in Mexico, but we'd love for him to get three or even four starts before he comes home.

We also looked at our terrific A-ball centerfielder, Jordan Schafer. He was tearing up the Arizona Fall League. He's only 21 years old, a great talent, and he's a big-time future player for Atlanta. Jordan will be with us in spring training, so we'll get to see more of him there.

We looked at Clint Sammons, who was one of our September callups. He's a great looking catcher. He hits, and he's very smart.

The backup catcher spot is wide open. We've got Clint, Corky Miller and Brayan Pena. We like Pena a lot and have always liked him as a backup catcher, especially since he can also play third base and the outfield. He runs well for a catcher, too.

Brayan was playing winter ball. He's a year-round player with tremendous stamina. Our young shortstop, Yunel Escobar, took some time off right after the season, but he's going to play some winter ball in Mexico, too.

I haven't heard much from Venezuela, though one of our coaches, Eddie Perez, and one of players, Pete Orr, are down there. Pete is playing for the team Eddie manages. The political climate is pretty unsettled right now, and some major league scouts are pulling out.

> "JEFF SHOULD HAVE WON A GOLD GLOVE LAST SEASON... HE'S ABSOLUTELY FANTASTIC IN RIGHT FIELD."

As far as filling the center field position, Frank Wren is working very hard on that. He's talking to a lot of people. We have this young guy, Gorkys Hernandez, we got from the Detroit Tigers (in exchange for Edgar Renteria), and we have Jordan Schaefer. But both of them are still pretty young.

The plan we anticipate is finding someone to fill the gap in center field next season, and hopefully one of these two young players will be ready to come in and play soon. But that's just a plan. We aren't sure how it's going work.

I think Frank is doing a great job. He asks for my input, and he and I have talked almost every day since the end of the season. He's going to be absolutely terrific.

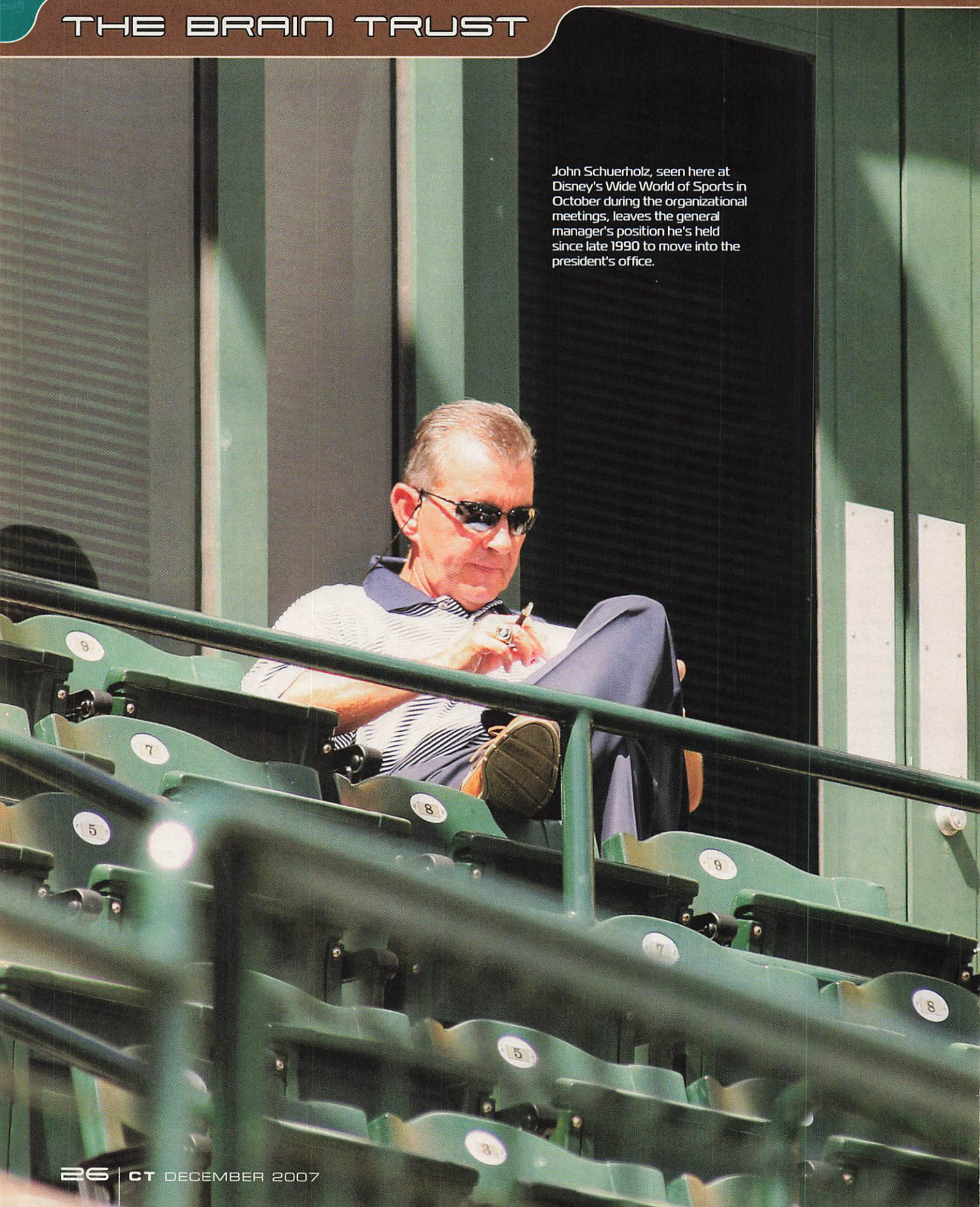
I was really proud of both Andruw Jones and Jeff Francoeur for earning Gold Gloves. Jeff should have won a Gold Glove last season (2006), so it was especially great to see him get the recognition this year. He's absolutely fantastic in right field.

In terms of our pitching, we have the makings of a very solid rotation. We know we have John Smoltz and Tim Hudson leading the way. We are hopeful about what Mike Hampton will be able to do.

Looking to the future, it looks especially bright with Jo-Jo Reyes. He has so much talent and a great mental makeup. He's a superb athlete and plays his position well. I said it at the end of the season - he is so close to being an important part of our rotation.

There's a lot of talk about having Tom Glavine back. He would look great in anyone's starting rotation. He's a young 41-year-old. He goes every time you give him the ball, makes every start, and throws strikes.

Tom was a great pitcher when he was with the Braves, but I think he's an even greater pitcher now. When he started pitching with the Mets, he changed his style, started throwing inside, and guys couldn't hit him.



John Schuerholz, seen here at Disney's Wide World of Sports in October during the organizational meetings, leaves the general manager's position he's held since late 1990 to move into the president's office.

STEPPING UP

Schuerholz Ends Incomparable Reign As GM To Move Into President's Office

BY MARK BOWMAN OF MLB.COM

WHEN JOHN SCHUERHOLZ left his job as a junior high school teacher in 1966 for a position in the Orioles front office, his intent was to follow in the footsteps of highly regarded Baltimore general manager Harry Dalton. Now that his journey as a GM is complete, Schuerholz can take pride in the fact that baseball history will forever remember him with same reverence as it does Dalton.

When Dalton passed away two years ago, many wrote that he was one of the shrewdest talent evaluators baseball has ever seen. Those skills that earned him this praise were at one time passed on to a young Schuerholz, who has earned the right to be considered one of the greatest general managers professional sports has ever seen.

While Schuerholz's contributions to his community and the Braves aren't complete, his historic reign as the club's general manager has ended. On Oct. 11, he announced that he's relinquishing that role to his longtime assistant Frank Wren and assuming the role of team president.

"In this era, when you talk about the best general managers, he is the guy," said John Hart, Schuerholz's close friend and a former major league GM. "Number one, it starts with his intellect, his passion and his will to win. Those are significant attributes.

"He's a confident man and a smart man. He is a man who learned a lot of lessons on the way up and applied them. They had a philosophy in Atlanta, and they stuck to it. He hired great people and empowered them to do their jobs. He's a fabulous listener and a tough negotiator."

Schuerholz's elevation to Hall of Fame status began in 1966 when he sent a letter to his hometown Orioles and expressed interest in joining their front office staff. Once given the opportunity to do so as an assistant in the baseball operations staff, he formed a bond with Lou Gorman, who would take him to Kansas City to help build the expansion Royals.

By the start of the 1982 season, Schuerholz had become the Royals general manager. He helped them reach the postseason in 1984 and to a World Championship in 1985. Five years later, when the Braves were looking for a general manager, club president Stan Kasten lured Schuerholz to Atlanta and the rest truly is history.

When Schuerholz arrived in Atlanta before the start of the 1991 season, the Braves had endured seven consecutive losing seasons and had spent four of the previous five years in last place. During the 17 years that have followed with him leading the way, the city of Atlanta has come to expect baseball greatness.

Beginning with their memorable "Worst-to-First" 1991 season, the Braves captured an unprecedented 14 consecutive division titles. In that span, they made five trips to the World Series and won the 1995 World Championship.

With the Braves' victory in the '95 World Series, Schuerholz established himself as the only GM to win a World Championship in both the National and American Leagues.

Despite the fact the Braves haven't advanced to the post-season either of the past two years, they are still viewed as a model franchise by many other organizations.

"We want to try and transform the Red Sox into a team like the Braves or the Yankees, where you can almost count on the post-season every year," Red Sox general manager Theo Epstein recently told The Boston Globe.

Epstein and Diamondbacks general manager Josh Byrnes highlight the new generation of GMs who aspire to follow in Schuerholz's footsteps.

While working under Hart, Byrnes had the opportunity to see his boss and Schuerholz interact in a relaxed atmosphere on a number of occasions. From some of those conversations, he was able to develop some of the ideas and skills that helped him lead the Diamondbacks to this year's National League Championship Series.

"With all due respect to a lot of people in this game, [Schuerholz] is the best general manager of his time," Byrnes said. "If you do this job, you aspire to match his accomplishments. You talk about naming awards after him and the Hall of Fame. He's thought of that highly in our field."

Like his early mentors, Gorman and Dalton, Schuerholz practiced the importance of putting an emphasis on scouting and player development. Over the course of the past two decades, the Braves have consistently had one of the game's most fruitful farm systems.

Of the eight position players in this past season's Opening Day lineup, shortstop Edgar Renteria was the only one not drafted and developed by the Braves. But Renteria represented one of the many

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

THE SCHUERHOLZ GM ERA

BEST RECORDS SINCE 1991

Team	Won	Lost	Pct.
1. Atlanta	1,594	1,092	.593
2. Yankees	1,557	1,126	.580
3. Boston	1,456	1,232	.542
4. St. Louis	1,424	1,261	.530
5. Cleveland	1,416	1,269	.527
6. White Sox	1,411	1,274	.526
7. Oakland	1,410	1,277	.525
8. Houston	1,410	1,279	.524
9. San Francisco	1,400	1,287	.521
10. Dodgers	1,394	1,294	.519
11. Seattle	1,378	1,307	.513
12. Angels	1,361	1,328	.506
13. Toronto	1,359	1,329	.505

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
1995

NATIONAL LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIPS
1991, 1992, 1995, 1996, 1999

DIVISION TITLES
1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005

ATLANTA BRAVES

The close working relationship between Schuerholz and Bobby Cox was essential to their success and mutual longevity.

BILL SETLIFF

BATTER UP!

I DECIDED NOT TO HAVE BONE SPURS REMOVED

I HAD SOME INJURIES spread throughout the season. I'd call them knickknack injuries, little things. But they were the types of injuries that catchers expect - dings on the hand, whatever. I'd say it was a pretty typical year, injury-wise, and nothing took me out of the lineup for long.

My ankle sprain from last season was aggravated this year because the (rolled ankle) injury jammed on the bone spur. Being hit on the (left ring) finger was really the main thing that bothered me. It was tough because my finger was affected in a lot of different aspects of the game - catching, hitting.

If I didn't hit a ball right on the sweet spot of the bat, if I hit it off the end or got jammed, the finger would flare up again. Two weeks after I got hit, I hurt my finger again when I got called for catcher interference, so it was tough.

But those types of injuries don't take you out of the game for an extended period of time. I never missed more than a couple of games. If you get those knickknack injuries, you can still play. Your personal numbers aren't the most important thing, as long as you can help the team. You need to be in there playing. I knew if I was good enough to squat or swing, I was going to play.

I don't think this year's injuries really had much to do with my batting average (.270). Hitting .333 (in 2006), well, I may never do that again!

I was pleased with my power numbers this season (18 HR/92 RBIs), but my average was down and I think that was a combination of my mechanics and the fact that I was being pitched a little differently.

> "I'M SEEING BETTER THAN WITH MY GLASSES OR CONTACT LENSES. I WON'T BE SQUINTING AT THE PLATE ANYMORE!"

I believe I'm better than a .270 hitter, and I think my average was mostly because my mechanics weren't right all season. When the season is over, you have time to think and look at things.

I knew, and everyone could see, if you put video from 2006 against what I did this year, that my bat angle was at a terrible position. The barrel of the bat was pointing toward the ground. It was a bad habit, and by the time I was really aware of it, it was too late to fix it.

My mechanics is one of those things that I'll be much more conscious of next season. I just know that the season I had in 2007 motivates me more when I'm working out for the next season.

At the end of the season, I sat down with the trainers and doctors and talked about having surgery on the bone spurs. We decided against it because they only kept me out of three or four games. Because of that and the fact that I'm only 23, we decided against the surgery. I can tape my ankles and play.

I did have Lasik corrective surgery on October 22. It took about a week for my eyes to settle down, but now I'm seeing better than with my glasses or contact lenses. I won't be squinting at the plate anymore!

My fielding is something that still needs to improve, big time, especially throwing runners out. But I think I got better in some aspects of calling the game, blocking balls. I know I'm better than (throwing out) 20 percent. One of these days I know I'll figure out throwing out runners.

Getting married, in December, will affect my baseball life in that when baseball's not going so great for me, and maybe I'm whining about it, Ashley will be there to kick me in the pants! It's better than just going home to the dogs! Seriously, though, I'm looking forward to having her with me, being my full-time cheering section.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

players Schuerholz has landed via trades that have often seemed lopsided in his favor.

Schuerholz's landmark trade with the Braves came in the middle of the 1993 season when his club was struggling. But after acquiring Fred McGriff from the Padres in exchange for Melvin Nieves, Donnie Elliott and Vince Moore, the Braves went on a second-half tear that resulted in the third of 14 consecutive division titles.

While this year's trade deadline acquisition of Mark Teixeira will rank high on Schuerholz's list of accomplishments, lesser-recognized deals also played a part in the team's prolonged success.

The 1999 trade deadline acquisition of versatile lefthander Terry Mulholland and shortstop Jose Hernandez from the Cubs helped lead to a trip to the World Series that season. Mike Devereaux was acquired from the White Sox on Aug. 25, 1995, and then two months later found himself as the National League Championship Series MVP.

Although he's primarily chosen to appear strict in the public eye, Schuerholz has thoroughly enjoyed the daily lifestyle of baseball. Under his business-like approach, he possesses a good sense of humor and enjoyment for laughter.

Schuerholz's most impressive trait is the daily motivation he continues to display after more than 40 years in baseball. He directed all of the discussions during the organizational meetings the club held in Orlando during early October, and never once showed indication to his scouts or other front office employees that he was planning to hand the GM duties to Wren.

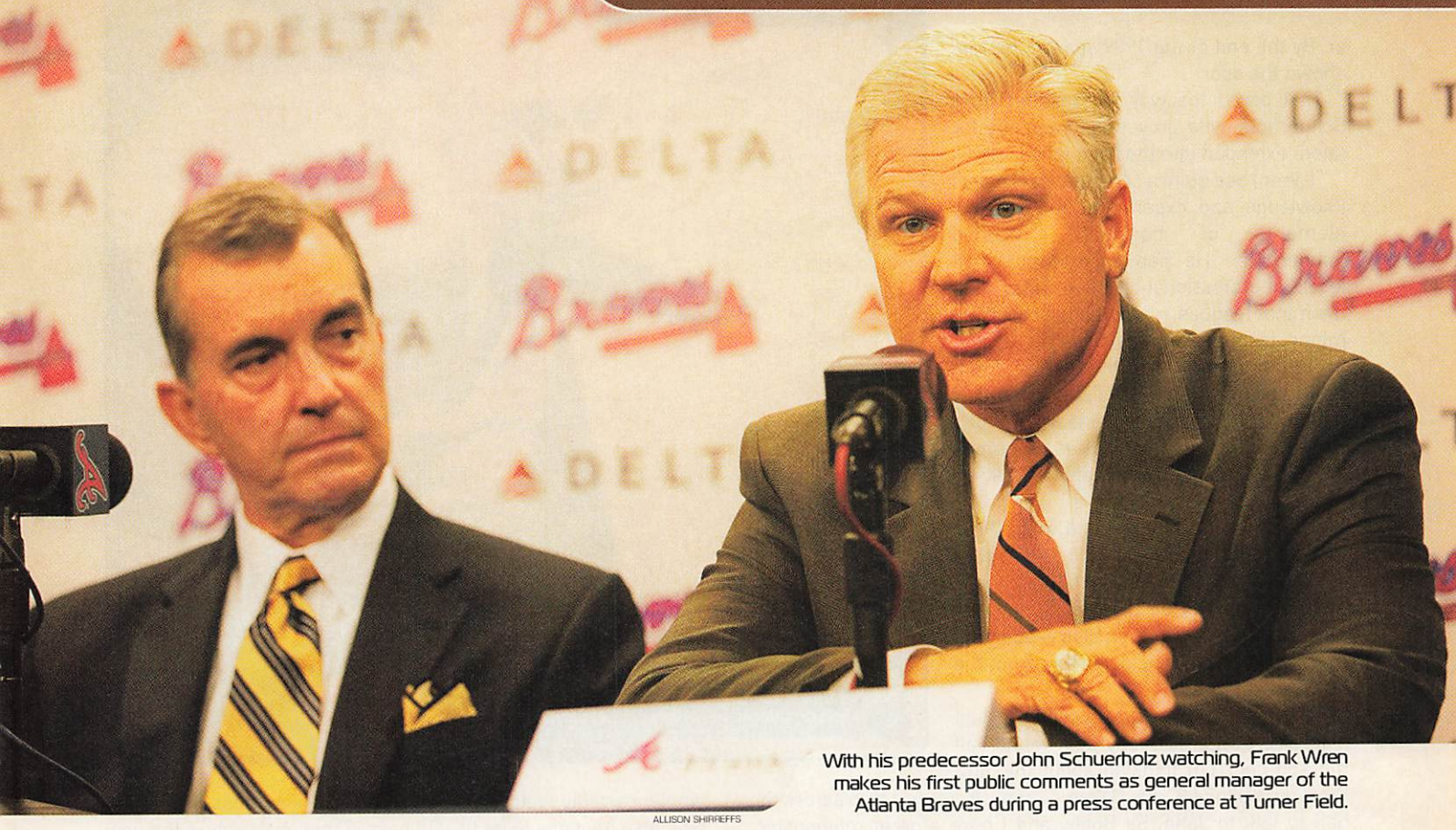
In other words, he was utilizing the same poker-faced approach that has allowed him to be so successful in a career in which public disclosure of plans could prove disastrous to the organization's well-being.

Schuerholz's ability to surround himself with top-notch individuals and his desire to succeed as a team allowed him to follow the message he constructed in a poem that he often likes to recite.

It reads:

"'I' and 'my' are words oft used by those who themselves are confused. Why won't their super egos trust the use of words like 'we' and 'us'?"

Fortunately for the Braves, they can still utilize the words "we" and "us" when referring to Schuerholz. As he showed during his unprecedented 26 years as a GM, he's a unique leader, who searches for daily success. He'll no doubt continue that as Braves president.



With his predecessor John Schuerholz watching, Frank Wren makes his first public comments as general manager of the Atlanta Braves during a press conference at Turner Field.

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

SUCCESSOR

Extensive, Multi-Faceted Resume Makes Wren Ideally Suited To Follow Schuerholz

BY JON COOPER

After 31 years in the business, Frank Wren probably thought that little could surprise him.

On October 9, he learned there's always something.

That afternoon, John Schuerholz, his boss and close colleague for eight years, turned what appeared to be a routine attempt to beat traffic at an Instructional League game in Orlando, where prospects prepare to embark on their dreams, into a dramatic meeting that had the 49-year-old Wren preparing to embark on his own dream.

"We were watching our youngsters play against Team Canada and I said, 'I think we've seen all of this game that we need to see. Let's get out of here and go back to the hotel and get something cold to drink,'" recalled Schuerholz. "We sat down and I told him what our [Schuerholz and Braves chairman and CEO Terry McGuirk's] decision was and told him we were inviting him to be our general manager."

"This is a dream come true," said Wren, who was hired by Schuerholz to be vice president/assistant general manager - player personnel back on Oct. 13, 1999. "When I came here eight years ago, this was the way I hoped it would end. You never know. But it really is kind of the culmination of 31 years and an exciting opportunity with a franchise like this."

Wren is a baseball lifer who reached Double-A as a centerfielder in the Montreal Expos chain, then coached in their minor league system for three years. He moved to the front office after that, starting as general manager of the Jamestown Expos of the New York-Penn League in 1985. He was promoted to Montreal's assistant scouting director, and by 1989, he was the team's director of Latin American scouting and operations, overseeing the building of a Latin baseball academy in the Dominican Republic, which served as a very successful pipeline to the majors in the '90s.

In 1991, Wren followed his then-boss, Dave Dombrowski, from Montreal to Florida, joining the expansion Marlins as vice president/assistant general manager, and was instrumental in building the 1997 World Series Champions.

Following the '98 season, he got what appeared to be his big break, when the Baltimore Orioles signed him to a three-year deal to be GM. But his honeymoon was short and his leash - held by famously overbearing owner Peter Angelos - was even short-

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

er. By the end of the 1999 season, he was shown the door.

That paved the way for an offer from Schuerholz, who proved his keen eye for talent extended into the front office.

"[Wren] had quite a complete package of knowledge and experience in the many elements of baseball," recalled Schuerholz. "He had experience in all facets of professional baseball - playing in the minor leagues, minor league coaching, minor league general manager, scout, scouting supervisor, director of Latin American scouting, assistant general manager of a major league team, GM of a major league team, as well as numerous recommendations from many who knew him and worked with him."

As Schuerholz's right-hand man, Wren took on important duties, such as negotiating contracts and dealing with free agents, and while he will be the first to say that he's not Schuerholz, Wren also is adamant that he is not a drastic departure from the man he replaces.

"There have been times over the last eight years where [Bobby Cox] would call me and say, 'I'm thinking about this guy. What do you think?'" said Wren. "Then, obviously, I'd go across the hall to talk to John. So Bobby and I have a great relationship, where we feel open to talk about players, personnel decisions and moves.

"I've dealt with agents my whole career," he added. "It's not something John enjoyed doing, and obviously, the last eight years I've done the bulk of that. Some of those relationships I'll continue to have, and some I'll hand over to the assistant GM."

With the promotion to GM came a four-year contract, and Wren wholeheartedly welcomes input from his new boss in Atlanta, who also happens to be his old boss, Schuerholz, who's the new team president.

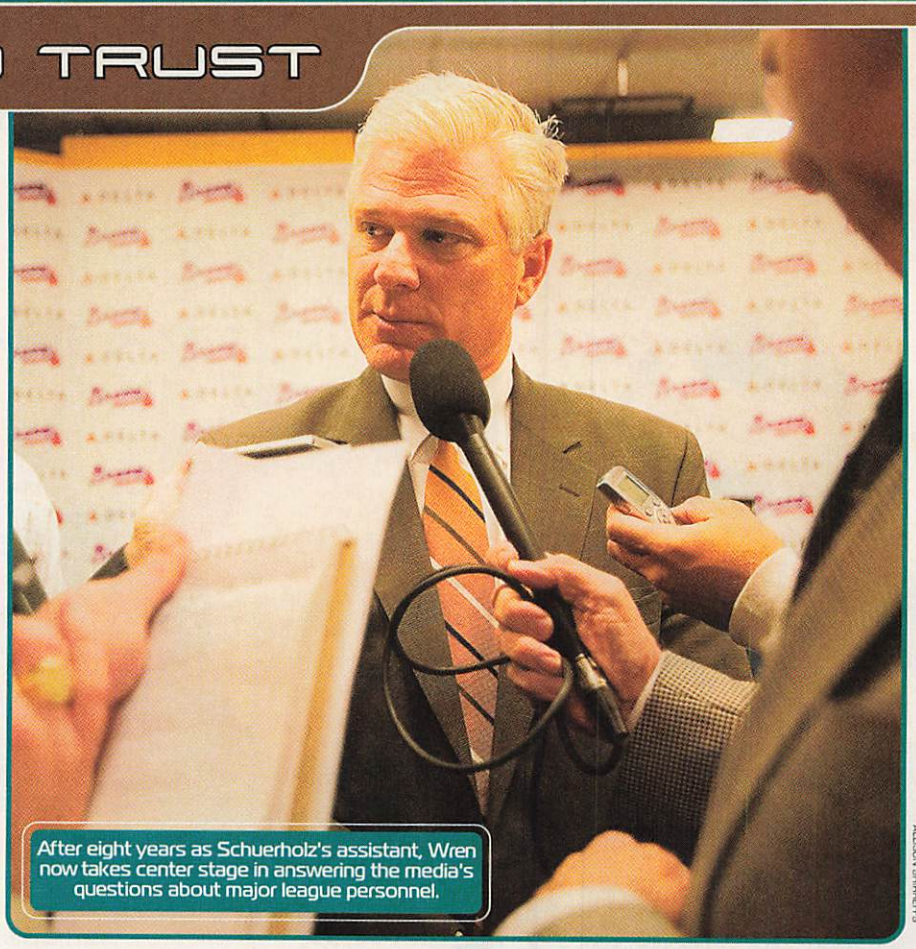
"I hope he comes up with some big ideas for me," said Wren with a laugh. "With [Schuerholz] having that baseball background, I'd be a fool not to want to utilize and take into account what he has to say and what he thinks."

Wren has proved that he is no fool, having turned down an offer from the Pittsburgh Pirates to be general manager and not pursuing other potential suitors during his years with the Braves.

That patience paid off, but Wren insists he had no regrets about staying in his old role in Atlanta and didn't lose any sleep over what might have been somewhere else. In fact, he said as much to his wife, Terri, three days before that fateful meeting with Schuerholz.

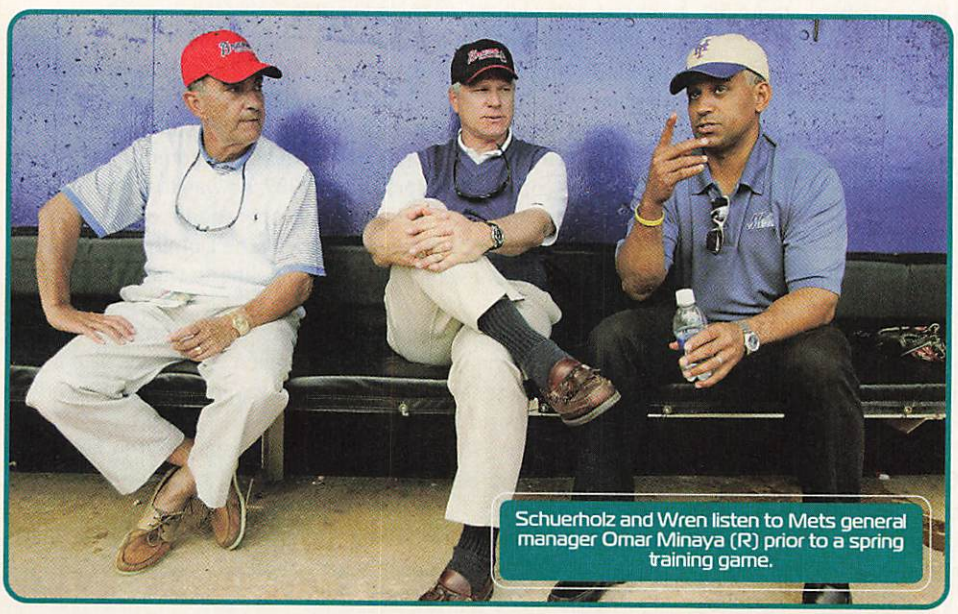
"We were talking about the future and what might happen some day - not knowing that any of this was in the works," he recalled. "I said, 'The one thing about it, not many people can say they spent eight years working with a Hall of Fame general manager and a Hall of Fame manager. You can take a lot away from that.' When it worked out, it was a happy moment."

That happy moment led to others around the Wren household.



After eight years as Schuerholz's assistant, Wren now takes center stage in answering the media's questions about major league personnel.

ALLISON INHOFFS



Schuerholz and Wren listen to Mets general manager Omar Minaya (R) prior to a spring training game.

ATLANTA BRAVES

"The twins (Kyle and Colby) are in 10th grade, the little one (Jordan) in seventh," he said. "They were quite excited that we weren't leaving."

Of course, his new position will require Wren seeing less of the family.

"It's 12 to 12, and I mean midnight until the next midnight. It's 365 days a year, and it's an all-encompassing job," said Wren. "I don't know how John's done it for 26 years. We're at general managers meetings or functions, where there are a lot of baseball people around, and they're amazed that he's done it for this long.

"I remember when I took this job before," he continued. "You feel responsible, not just for the people that you work for, you feel responsible for a whole fan base to put a good product on the field. So, there's a lot of responsibility there."

The Braves have no doubt that Wren is the right man to handle all of those responsibilities.

"Frank is going to attack the general managership like no general manager has since the last one came along," said McGuirk. "It is an amazing passion that he has."

Indeed, Wren has already started quickly, first hiring Bruce Manno - an assistant under him in Baltimore - from St. Louis to fill his shoes as assistant GM and, the day after the World Series ended and the blackout on transactions was lifted, he made his first major player transaction, acquiring a pair of highly regarded prospects, righthander Jair Jurrjens and outfielder Gorkys Hernandez, from Detroit in exchange for Edgar Renteria.

He is confident that it won't be the last move and is even more confident in his ability to continue to make the right moves.

"I think evaluating talent is probably my greatest strength, and I think over the years I've developed an ability to manage people," he said. "That's probably one of the things that's most overlooked in this job. At the end of the day, you're managing people. Whether it's a major league staff, a major league club, scouts, player development or baseball operations, hundreds of people, you're in charge."

Wren recognizes the importance of staying on top of player development and says it will be a priority.

"I have to go out and see our young players, have a good sense of them," he said. "It's one of those things that builds your spirits. You go to the minor leagues and see quality talent and know they're arriving in Atlanta in another year or so."

SANTANA'S FATE SWAYS AS TWINS PLOT COURSE

THERE ARE TWO THEORIES on whether the likely departures of free agent righthander **Carlos Silva** and centerfielder **Torii Hunter** would compel Minnesota to trade lefthander **Johan Santana**. One theory is that the Twins would keep Santana and try to win next season, something that would be difficult if their rotation included only young pitchers. The other theory is that the losses of Silva and Hunter would create enough holes for the Twins to justify "cycling down" and moving Santana, one of the game's elite pitchers and a lefthander to boot. If that were the case, the Twins also might consider moving closer **Joe Nathan**, who is one year away from free agency.

The Phillies raised eyebrows by re-signing left-handed reliever **J.C. Romero** to a three-year, $12 million deal. Romero, 31, was released by the Red Sox last June and pitched in 20 of the Phillies' last 25 games, including post-season. It's easy to envision him regressing next season, considering how many relievers fluctuate from year to year. Then again, Romero proved he could pitch in Philadelphia. The two other lefty specialists on the open market, **Ron Mahay**, who ended the season with the Braves, and **Jeremy Affeldt**, could not make that claim.

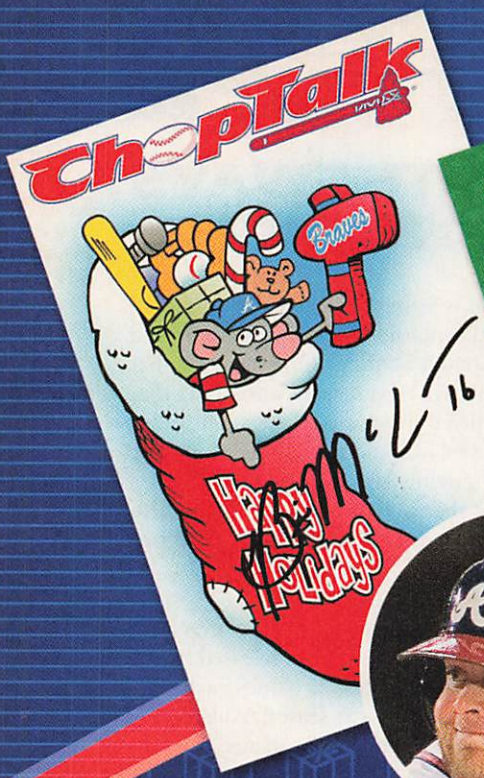
The Cubs, in trading for Tigers infielder **Omar Infante**, wanted to add more versatility to their bench. Infante, a right-handed hitter, likely will play second base, shortstop and center field. The Cubs' biggest need is a left-handed hitter to play right field - a slugger who would be an upgrade over the departed **Cliff Floyd** and **Jacque Jones**. In 453 at-bats last season, Jones hit only five home runs.

One reason the Marlins seem content to hold off on trading lefthander **Dontrelle Willis**: They expect Willis to revive under pitching coach **Mark Wiley**, who held the same position with the team when Willis won 22 games in 2005. If Willis can rebound from his career-high 5.17 ERA last season, the Marlins could auction him at the July 31 non-waiver trading deadline for a greater return than they would receive this off-season.

Nationals president **Stan Kasten**, who once held the same position with the Braves, wants to sign free agent centerfielder **Andruw Jones**, but only at the right price. It is unlikely the Nationals would give Jones say, $16 million per season. But if the Nats were getting a perceived bargain, one rival executive says, they would jump at the perennial Gold Glover. As free agency began, the market for the former Brave was unclear. The White Sox were among the teams that seemed to prefer **Torii Hunter**. The Giants and Dodgers were potential suitors.

It will not be easy for Red Sox righthander **Curt Schilling** to collect his $2 million in weight-related incentives. The target weight in his new contract is 10 to 15 pounds below where Schilling was at any point last season, according to an industry source, and his six monthly weigh-ins will occur at random times. In other words, Schilling could not binge on May 5, knowing his weigh-in was May 30. The Red Sox could put him on a scale the very next day.

- KEN ROSENTHAL IS A SENIOR WRITER FOR FOXSPORTS.COM



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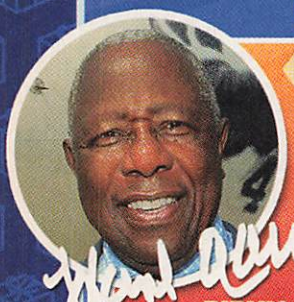

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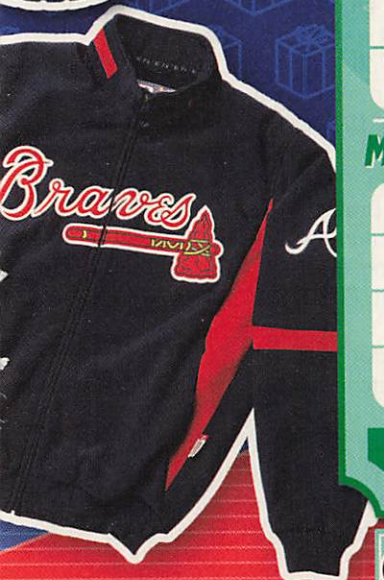

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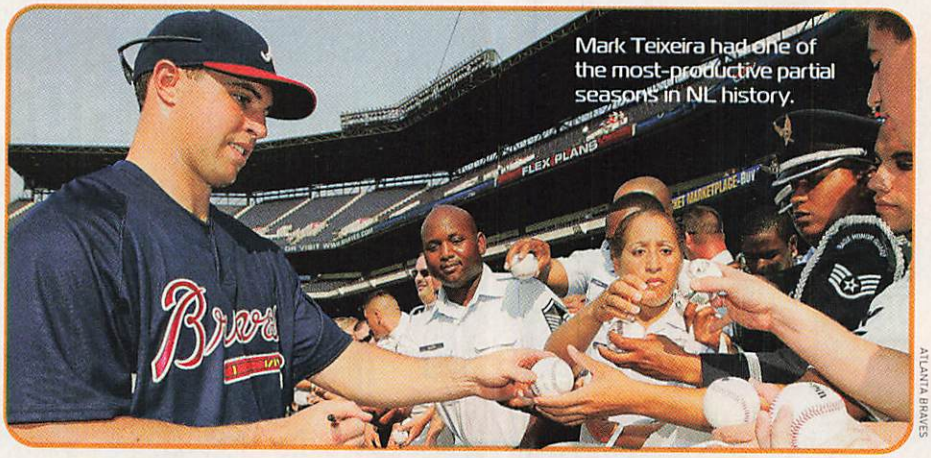
TEIXEIRA'S STATS BETTER THAN McGRIFF'S

BY STEVE FALL


Mark Teixeira had one of the most-productive partial seasons in NL history.

ATLANTA BRAVES

CONSIDERING THAT MARK TEIXEIRA played in just 54 games after joining the Braves Aug. 1, he put up remarkable numbers. In fact, he had one of the most productive partial seasons in National League history.

Teixeira's 17 home runs with Atlanta came in 240 plate appearances. Only Mark McGwire, who had 24 in 1997, delivered more homers than in less than 250 plate appearances in NL history. Teixeira also had the most RBIs (57) in 250 or fewer plate appearances since 1922 (Reb Russell, 75).

Teixeira's partial season stands alone among Braves with 250 or fewer plate appearances. He had five more homers than three players who tied with 12: Bob Tillman (1969), Dave May (1975) and Joe Adcock (1957). Jack Stivetts' 49 RBIs in 1896 marked the highest RBI total before Teixeira came along.

When Teixeira joined the Braves, many compared his acquisition to the club's 1993 trade for Fred McGriff. While McGriff had more plate appearances (291) than Teixeira (240) after the deal – which missed the aforementioned cutoff – he and the current Braves first basemen put up very similar statistics. McGriff had two more homers (19 vs. 17). Teixeira had the RBI advantage (56 to 55). Teixeira edged McGriff in batting average (.317 to .310), on-base percentage (.404 to .392), and slugging percentage (.615 to .612).

During John Schuerholz's tenure as Braves general manager (1991-2007), the club posted an amazing .593 winning percentage (1,594-1,092). The Yankees ranked second with a .580 figure in that time frame. The Red Sox placed a distant third (.542). The Cardinals came next closest among NL teams (.530).

The Braves' winning percentage under Schuerholz projects to 96.1 victories per 162-game season. To put that in perspective, no National League team won more than 90 games this past season. The Indians and Red Sox won 96 games apiece in the American League. The Braves averaged 96 wins over a 17-year span.

Atlanta won 100 or more games six times in the Schuerholz era. All the other NL clubs combined for just six 100-win campaigns since 1991.

It's not like Schuerholz inherited a perennial winner either. The Braves went 1,198-1,490 in the 17 years before he took over (1974 through 1990). Their winning percentage (.446) trailed every other major league team except the Mariners (.424), an expansion team during that era.

Among all the numbers and statistics surrounding baseball, one seldom gets mentioned. A player's age, however, is among the most important.

Two players may have the same home run totals, batting average, and runs batted in. If one is five years younger, though, he has far more future value. Players 27 years old and under tend to get better, and those over 33 usually decline. While stars such as John Smoltz and Chipper Jones have sustained their success past their prime years, they're the exceptions.

Both the Rockies and Diamondbacks demonstrated this year what teams can do with good young talent. By some measures, the Braves have as much quality youth as either of those playoff teams.

The 2007 Braves had 2,914 plate appearances by players in their age-25 season or younger (based on each player's age on June 30). That represents over 45 percent of the club's total plate appearances. Only the Diamondbacks and Brewers – who both had exactly 3,087 plate appearances from this age group – had more by players that young. Atlanta nearly doubled Colorado's figure (1,578).

Jeff Francoeur (696), Kelly Johnson (608), Brian McCann (552), Yunel Escobar (355) and Scott Thorman (307) gave the Braves five players in their age-25 season or younger with at least 300 plate appearances. Only the Brewers could match that claim, and the Diamondbacks (4) and Rockies (2) both fell short of Atlanta.

The 25-and-under Braves combined to bat .273 in 2007. That ranked eighth in the NL, but the club fared better in power categories. They drove in 356 runs, which topped every other team except Milwaukee (431). The Atlanta youngsters also tied the Dodgers for fourth with 75 home runs. That trailed the Brewers (152), Diamondbacks (97) and Marlins (83).

Braves pitchers in their age-25 season or younger also saw significant action in 2007. They worked the seventh-most innings (430.2) among NL clubs. That led Arizona (404) and narrowly trailed Colorado (439.2). Atlanta's 60 games started, which ranked sixth in the league, topped both the D-Backs and Rockies (50 starts apiece).

Chuck James (161.1) pitched a good chunk of the Braves' innings. The next biggest contributors were Kyle Davies (86 IP before getting traded to Kansas City), Oscar Villarreal (76.1) and Jo-Jo Reyes (50.2).

Qualitative statistics for the 25-and-under Atlanta pitchers were not as impressive as those from their young hitters group. They went 22-25 with a 4.81 ERA, which placed just 12th in the league. Nonetheless, the numerous contributions by Braves in this age range show a positive trend for the club's future.

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GLOBAL INITIATIVE

The Never-Ending Hunt For the Best Talent Requires a Worldwide Scouting Effort

BY BILL BALLEW

THE TASK OF TRYING TO FIND future major league players on sandlots used to be compared to looking for a needle in a haystack. Today it's more like searching for that same needle in a hay field - a very big hay field.

That's because the popularity of baseball has spread to nearly all corners of the world, causing the Braves to disperse their scouts to nearly all corners of the earth in the never-ending quest to keep the talent pipeline running to Atlanta.

The 2007 Atlanta Braves utilized players from as far away as Australia and as close to home as Georgia. Players from 10 countries (Australia, Canada, Colombia, Cuba, Curacao, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama, United States, Venezuela) played in Atlanta.

With baseball the sport of preference for the United States' two fastest-growing population segments - Hispanic and Asian - and players from north of the border in Canada becoming more commonplace, it is little wonder that Major League Baseball continues to break attendance and revenue records every season.

"The good organizations tap every resource available," said new Braves general manager Frank Wren. "It doesn't matter if it's Japan, Australia, the Caribbean, the United States, wherever. It probably won't be too long before Europe becomes a talent source."

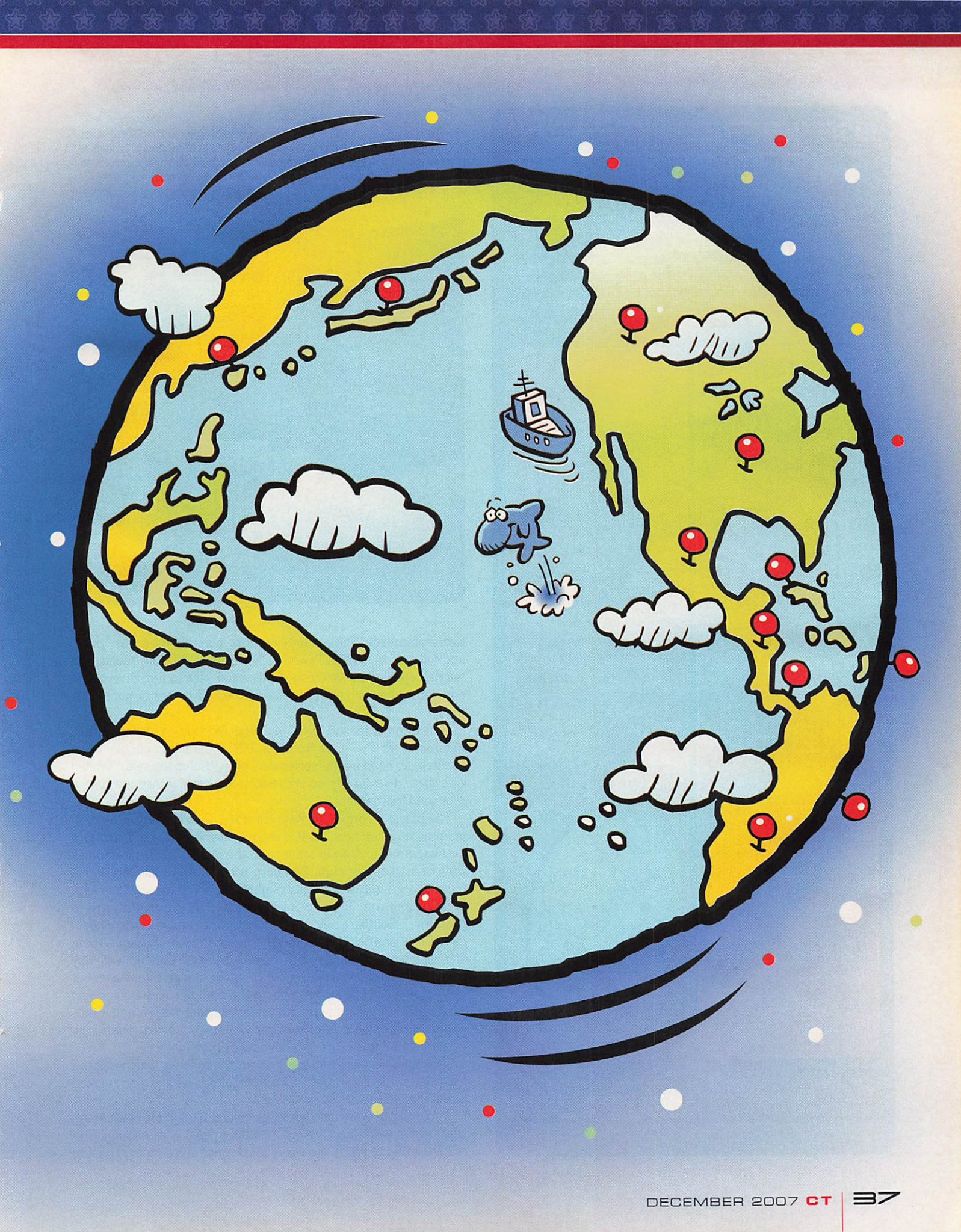
The Braves' global approach is even more evident when dissecting the diversity of the players in their farm system. Players from 13 different countries are playing on the Braves' farm. Just among the 126 Americans, 29 states are represented in the organization, which demonstrates the Braves' vast scouting reach.

"It's not an exaggeration to say that we try to blanket the entire world in our attempt to find the next contributors for the Atlanta Braves," said scouting director Roy Clark. "Whether we're looking for players in the United States or abroad, our approach is the same. We can control two things: our preparation and our work ethic. And if we prepare and work as hard as we possibly can, we're going to find a lot of players that have a chance to be impact guys."

Regardless of where the talent originates, Clark's staff of some 20 full-time domestic scouts and a similar number of international evaluators must have intimate knowledge of its territory as well as the occasional good fortune of being at the right place at the right time. Again, much of that success is the residue of hard work and a willingness to take a calculated chance.

After spending his first season as an Atlanta scout scouring the Canadian countryside, Lonnie Goldberg accepted Clark's recommendation that he expand his horizons. The Braves had made minimal impact in drafting and signing players from the junior college ranks, and Clark believed the added responsibility would be ideal for Goldberg. In June 2005, that led him to the Junior College World Series in Grand Junction, Colo.

At the time, teams could maintain the rights of drafted players until the next year's draft if the athlete was playing baseball at a



WHERE THEY COME FROM

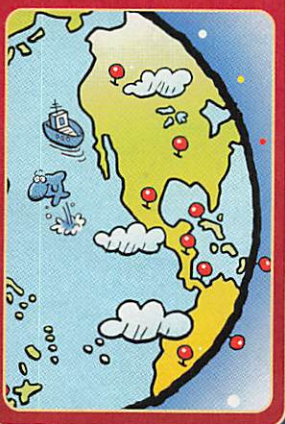
There are 218 "homegrown" players in the Braves' farm system. Following is a breakdown on the number of players who come from each of the 13 nations and 29 states represented by these players, who were originally signed by the Braves (not acquired via trade, free agency or other means). In the case of college players, the location of their school (not necessarily their home state) was used in this chart.

NON-U.S.
12 Nations (92 Players)

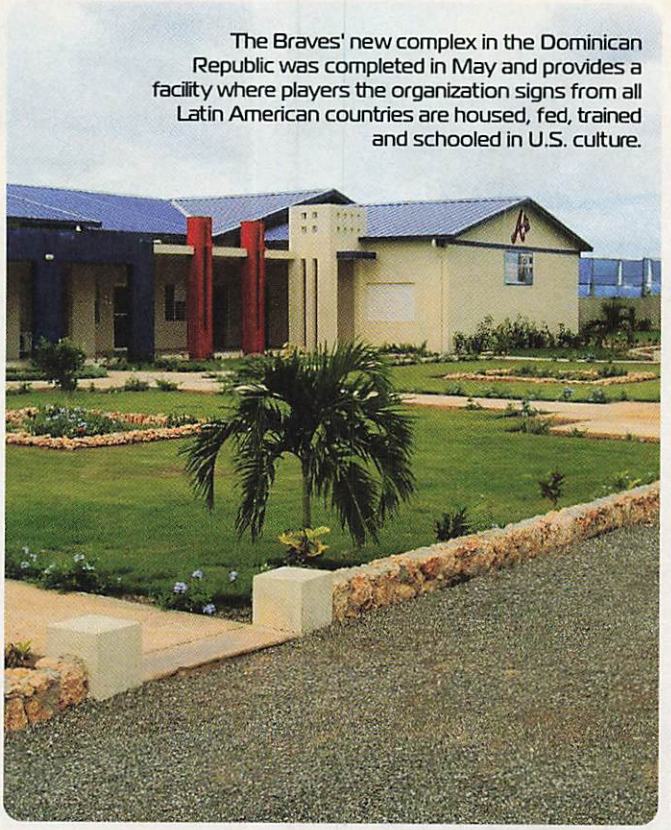
- Dominican Republic (40)
- Venezuela (20)
- Panama (9)
- Mexico (5)
- Cuba (4)
- Colombia (3)
- Japan (3)
- Australia (2)
- Canada (2)
- Nicaragua (2)
- New Zealand (1)
- Taiwan (1)

UNITED STATES
29 States (126 players)

- Florida (20)
- Georgia (20)
- California (12)
- North Carolina (11)
- Alabama (8)
- Nevada (6)
- Texas (6)
- South Carolina (5)
- New Jersey (3)
- Oregon (3)
- Pennsylvania (3)
- Tennessee (3)
- Arizona (2)
- Illinois (2)
- Iowa (2)
- Kentucky (2)
- Louisiana (2)
- Mississippi (2)
- New Mexico (2)
- New York (2)
- Virginia (2)
- Connecticut (1)
- Idaho (1)
- Indiana (1)
- Maine (1)
- Minnesota (1)
- Montana (1)
- New Hampshire (1)
- Ohio (1)



NOTE: Players from 10 countries (Australia, Canada, Colombia, Cuba, Curacao, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama, United States, Venezuela) were utilized on the major league roster in 2007 but are not included in the chart.



The Braves' new complex in the Dominican Republic was completed in May and provides a facility where players the organization signs from all Latin American countries are housed, fed, trained and schooled in U.S. culture.

ATLANTA BRAVES

two-year college. The majority of these players, known as "draft-and-follows" or "DNFs," were selected after the 20th round. The teams benefited by receiving nearly a full year to further evaluate and get to know the players before deciding whether or not to sign them.

"The primary reason I went to Grand Junction was to sign Jamie Richmond (RHP, 7-6 at Rome in '07), a Canadian pitcher I had scouted, as soon as the series was over," Goldberg said. "While I was there, I saw a big kid with South Mountain in Arizona have a real good tournament."

The player's name was Kala Ka'aihue, who had spent most of his time as a catcher. The Braves, meanwhile, were looking for a first baseman to draft in order to fill the slot on the organization's Gulf Coast League club. Goldberg met Ka'aihue as well as his parents and indicated Atlanta might be interested in drafting him.

"Kala told me, 'If you want a big leaguer, you might want to draft me,'" Goldberg said. "I thought that was a great response. I called Roy and told him I had the feeling there was something special about this kid. I was driving back to Canada and Roy called me again and asked me if I wanted to sign him. Turns out he was eligible to be signed prior to the draft because Boston had drafted him the year before but voided his contract. I found Kala's phone number on a napkin in my wallet, called him and made him an offer. I told him I had to know by midnight."

The deadline came and went. The next morning, which was the first day of the 2005 draft, Ka'aihue called Goldberg and asked him if the offer was still available.

"I told him it was, but that I was taking $1,000 off because he kept me up worrying all night," Goldberg said with a laugh. "He really wanted to catch and was considering returning to school to

do that before he decided playing first base for the Braves was a pretty nice deal."

Ka'aihue led the Atlanta farm system with 22 home runs last year, splitting time between Myrtle Beach and Mississippi.

In addition to locking up Richmond and Ka'aihue, Goldberg along with fellow scout Tom Battista also played a role in the scouting and signing of prospects Tommy Hanson, Kris Medlen, Cole Rohrbough and Eric Barrett. While following Rohrbough and Barrett this year in the Junior College World Series, Goldberg liked what he saw in a little-known pitcher from Texas' San Jacinto Junior College.

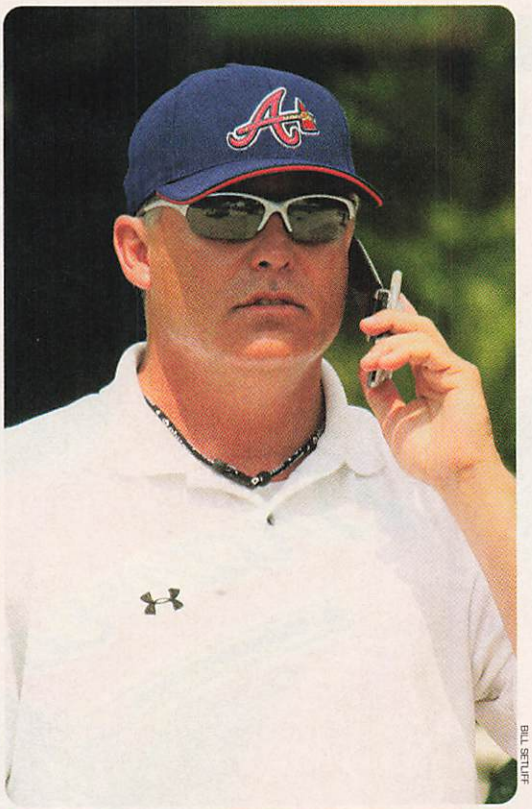
"I know San Jac's head coach, Tom Arrington, well, and when he suggests one of his guys, it pays to listen," Goldberg said. "He told me to keep an eye on one of his pitchers, a 5-foot, 9-inch guy named Benino Pruneda. He had only pitched something like 12 innings all season because he came to school as an infielder. But I saw him pitch in Colorado, and he showed me an electric arm."

Despite his limited pitching experience, Pruneda's fastball was clocked in the 93-95 mph range. However, with the draft-and-follow rule eliminated beginning with the 2007 draft, Goldberg and the Braves had to make a decision. They opted to select Pruneda in the 31st round and send him to pitch for a week in the East Cobb program in Marietta, Ga. Clark liked what he saw there of Pruneda, which led to Goldberg signing a pitcher for $200,000 who was not on the radar screen for most teams.

"Benino's doing great, too," Clark said. "He threw as hard as 97 during Instructional League. He's not a big guy, but he has lightning in that arm."

Around the same time the Braves signed Pruneda, they also made a huge splash on the international front by signing Colombian righthander Julio Teheran to a contact worth $850,000. The 16-year-old reportedly received higher offers from other clubs, most notably the Yankees, but the Teheran family felt most comfortable with Atlanta due to the tireless efforts of Johnny Almaraz.

"People all over the world need to trust you and believe what you're saying," said Almaraz, who joined the Braves last December as director of Latin American operations. "We were the only organization that called him every day and showed up for all of his games. His parents wanted a certain environment for Julio, and they saw the Braves would make his interests a priority."



BILL SETLIFF

Scouting director Roy Clark (above) utilizes some 40 full-time scouts to "blanket the world" in an effort to find treasures such as Benino Pruneda (below) an overlooked pitcher by most organizations who has "lightning in his arm."

SAN JACINTO JUNIOR COLLEGE

One major selling point Almaraz could offer the Teherans, as well as other young players from the Caribbean, is the opportunity to learn the protocol of professional baseball at the Braves' brand new complex in San Pedro de Macoris, Dominican Republic. Completed this past May, the state-of-the-art facility brings the recent signees from throughout Latin America together to work on their skills in the Dominican Summer League. The players reside and eat all of their meals at the complex while studying the game and the U.S. culture, particularly the English language.

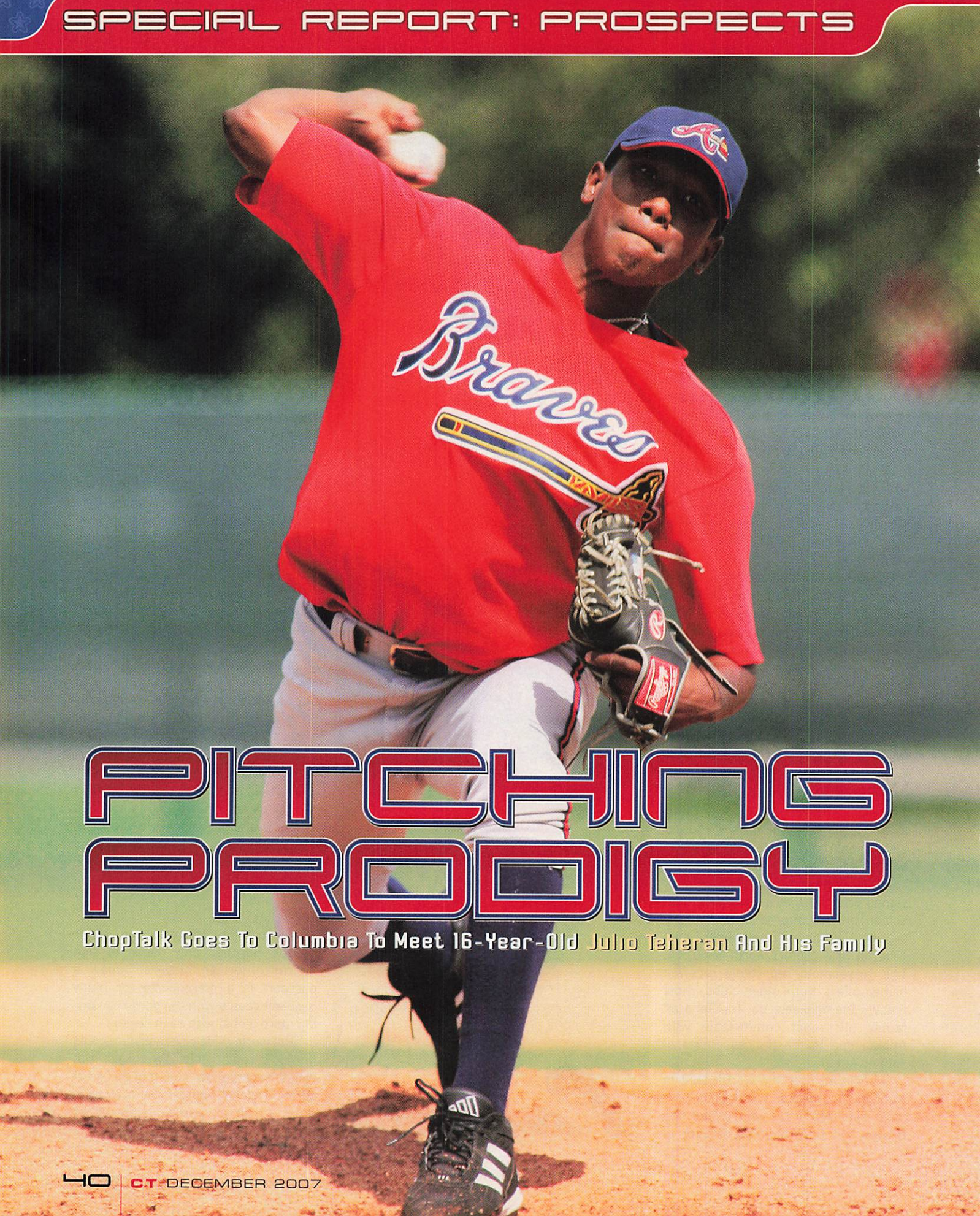
"Johnny has really put our Latin program on the map from the standpoint that there's a real focus there now," Wren said. "Johnny spearheaded getting our new complex up and running, and it's absolutely gorgeous. With the kids that are starting to come out of there and the July signings from this year, we're very pleased. We definitely feel we're going in the right direction."

Almaraz, who resides in Texas and spends a considerable amount of time bouncing between countries throughout the region by flying out of Mexico City, believes his area is continually growing with the rest of the baseball world. It will not be long, says Almaraz, before the Braves will be finding players in additional nations.

"Brazil is growing to love baseball as rapidly as anywhere," Almaraz said. "There is a huge Japanese influence in that country, and they have introduced baseball there in a big way. They are playing the game more and more in Brazil, and the talent is getting better and better."

And to think, 60 years ago, Major League Baseball only began to sign African-American players. Today, a passport is a prerequisite for many baseball scouts with the game becoming more global with each season.

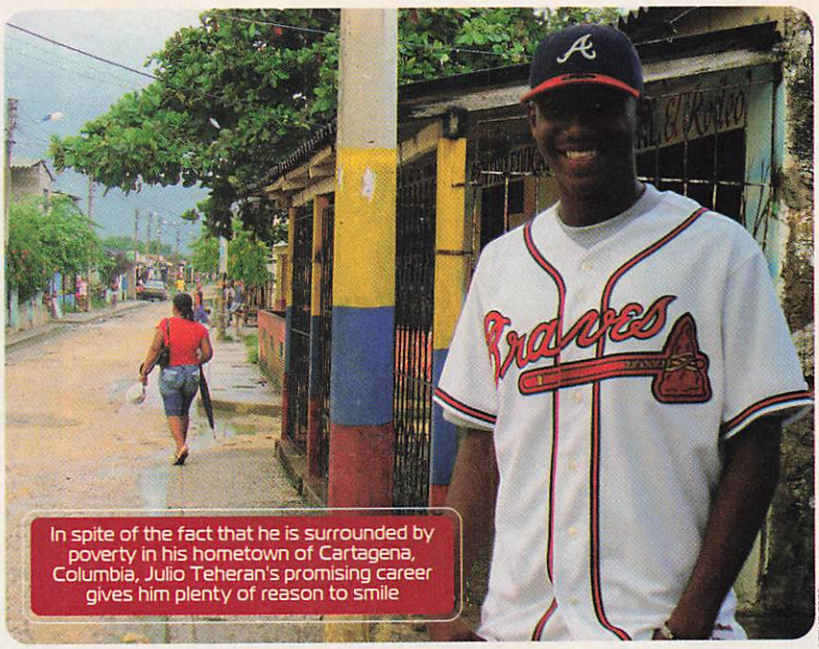
"The world-wide coverage our scouts provide is remarkable," Wren said. "But with the competitive nature of this great game, a global approach is a must in order to be a championship-caliber club."



PITCHING PRODIGY

ChopTalk Goes To Columbia To Meet 16-Year-Old Julio Teheran And His Family

BY JOSÉ OROZCO



In spite of the fact that he is surrounded by poverty in his hometown of Cartagena, Columbia, Julio Teheran's promising career gives him plenty of reason to smile

JOSE OROZCO

AIDA ZAVALZA REMEMBERS her grandson, Julio, carrying a stick everywhere he went as a boy. He swatted at pebbles and bottle caps. By age 5, Julio was playing baseball for his uncle Miguel's team. At 13, Julio took a personal vow, committing his energy to developing his baseball potential.

Now 16, Julio Teheran - Latin America's hottest pitching prospect in years - is one of the most-exciting prospects in the Braves organization after signing for an $850,000 bonus in July.

Teheran's meteoric rise and the financial windfall it brought could not have come too soon for the young star's family. For 12 years, the Teherans lived in Olaya, a neighborhood in Cartagena, a city on Colombia's Caribbean coast better known for its picturesque colonial quarter than for the open sewers, gun shot victims, and unpaved streets of its poor neighborhoods.

"There's a lot of poverty and a dicey scene," said Julio Teheran Sr., 45, the proud father of the Braves' prospect. "People drink a lot of rum and party a lot. It's dangerous."

At a recent farewell party in Olaya for Sugar Marimon, a Kansas City Royals pitching prospect and one of Julio's closest friends, Marlyn Pinto, Julio's mother, kept close watch on her son, who carries on his young shoulders the family's hopes for economic well-being.

"Here, it's quiet, but over there, it's screwed up," said the senior Teheran at the three-story home in Alameda La Victoria, a middle class neighborhood full of single-family homes and driveways where the family moved a month ago.

Previously in Olaya, 10 family members, including young Julio, shared a run-down, one-story home owned by Zavalza, Julio's maternal grandmother, that had a single toilet located in a muddy backyard.

The Teherans ran a small store out of one of their rooms. When Julio's father was laid off from his security guard job a couple of years back, the family had to get by on the store's meager profits and the father's random shifts at a local fast food restaurant.

"You don't know how much we waited for the moment of the signing," said Zavalza. "In Cartagena, you can't find a steady job."

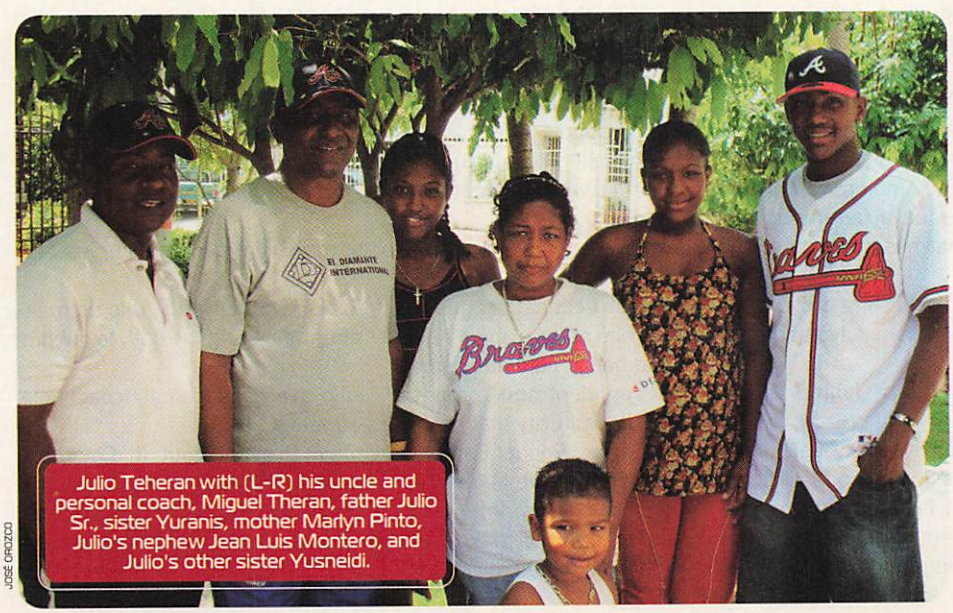
Without a good connection, low-skilled workers get contracted for a few months, then let go, said Zavalza.

"We went through hard times," said Teheran's father, visibly bothered by the memories.

Even as the family eked out a living, everyone pitched in to support Julio when he traveled to a baseball championship or tryout. Instead of offering money, grandmother Zavalza prayed for Julio.

"I did my part by seeking the Lord's help," said Zavalza. "I would say: 'Lord, I place my grandson in your hands. You know that he is this family's hope for getting us out of hardship.'"

"Already, the economic situation has improved," continued Zavalza. "We are talking about putting the bathroom inside (her) house and building a porch in front of the house."



Julio Teheran with (L-R) his uncle and personal coach, Miguel Theran, father Julio Sr., sister Yuranis, mother Marlyn Pinto, Julio's nephew Jean Luis Montero, and Julio's other sister Yusneidi.

JOSÉ OROZCO

BILL SETLIFF

Many boys and their families around the Caribbean see baseball as the way out of poverty. Poor, uneducated and under-employed, families in Olaya and similar neighborhoods around the region suffer from severe exclusion and inequality. On these muddy, unpaved streets where the stench of sewage fills the air, baseball represents not only potential wealth, but honor and fulfillment, as well.

Far from burdening him, the Teheran family's hopes motivate Julio to become the big league star his family longs to see.

"They help me to keep working, to sacrifice more to come out ahead," said Julio. "One feels confidence, more sure

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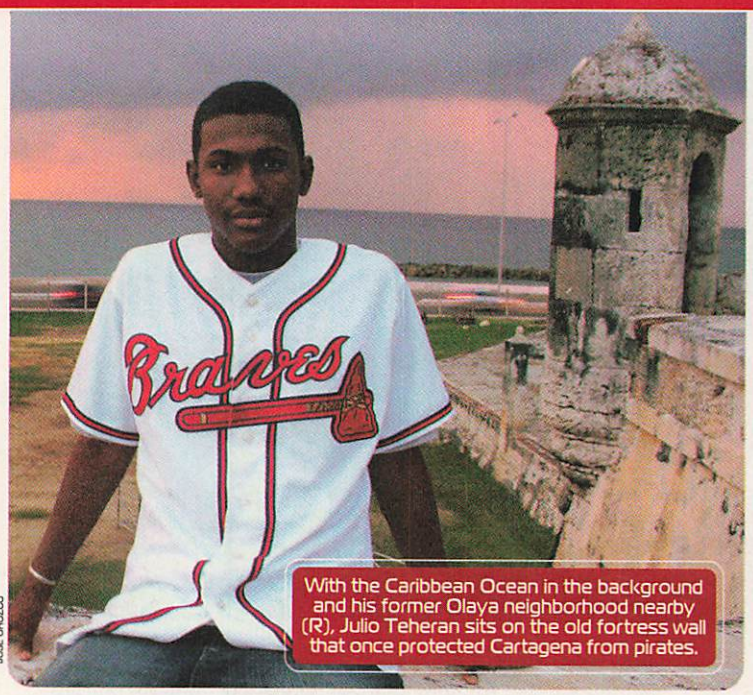
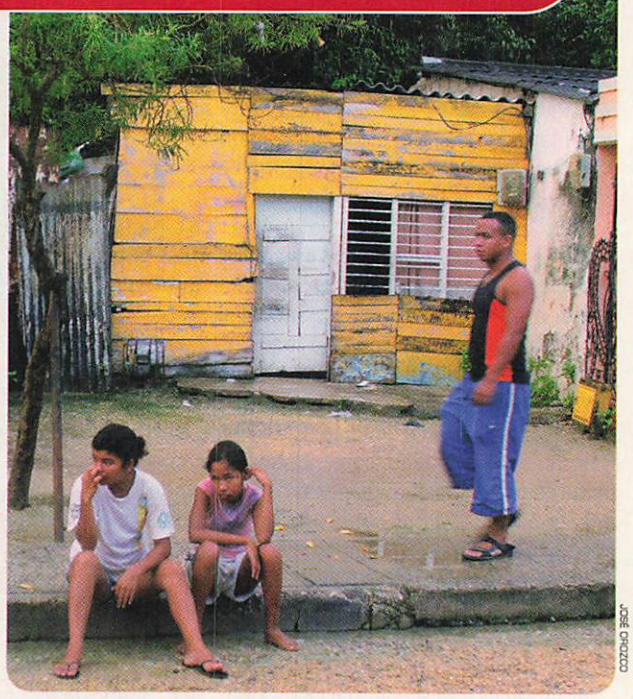


JOSÉ OROZCO

With the Caribbean Ocean in the background and his former Olaya neighborhood nearby (R), Julio Teheran sits on the old fortress wall that once protected Cartagena from pirates.



JOSÉ OROZCO

of what you're doing. It motivates me more."

Calm and collected, the 16-year-old takes the burden of expectations in stride.

"The family needs us," he said, referring to himself and cousin Mike Theran (due to registrar errors, members of the Teheran clan spell their last names slightly different), age 17, uncle Miguel's son, who is a second baseman that signed with the Braves in May.

"If you know your family is placing their hopes on you, you won't let them down."

With the livelihoods of so many people riding on Julio's signing and his magical right arm, uncle Miguel Theran, Julio's personal pitching coach, used him as a closer to conserve him until securing the contract.

Considering Julio's lack of work, Miguel, a former minor league pitcher who scouts for the Braves in Colombia, was all the more satisfied by his nephew's strong pitching in this fall's Florida Instructional League at Disney's Wide World of Sports.

According to Miguel's records (official stats are not kept in Instructional League), Julio gave up three runs and five hits, one of them a home run, and struck out seven in 12 innings (2.25 ERA).

Like the eager student that grandmother Zavalza remembers, Julio paid attention and learned from what has so far been his toughest competition.

"The hitters are really strong," said Julio of his first professional exposure. "Leave a ball high, and they will take advantage. It's helped me a lot to pitch smarter."

That's the main reason Julio likes Atlanta ace John Smoltz - pitching smarts.

"He knows just when in the count to use his slider," said Julio.

In his own pitching arsenal, Julio boasts a 94-mph fastball, as well as three other pitches - a two-seam fastball with a sharp downward break, a very effective changeup that works like a sinker, and a curveball that drops, according to uncle Miguel.

"His mechanics are perfect, and he has good control," said Miguel.

At 94 mph, Julio's fastball already is major league velocity and one of the best in the Braves organization.

"I'm shocked by how quickly he has acquired miles (speed)," added Miguel. "In two years, he went from 84 to 94 miles per hour."

How does a 16-year-old develop so fast, so early?

Miguel attributes his nephew's rapid development to a rigorous physical training program that harnesses Julio's impressive physical gifts - he is a lean 6-feet-2 - in his pitching.

But the fastball is another matter.

"I consider the velocity genetic," said Miguel. "I threw hard, as did a cousin. This arm strength comes from us."

With the 100-mph mark not too far off on the radar gun, Julio may have to abandon the obvious temptation to ramp up velocity in order to master his other pitches, says Miguel. Instead of 100 mph, he may have to settle for throwing 97 mph consistently.

By Julio's own admission, he needs to work a little on his curveball. The Instructional League coaches liked his stuff, but worked with him on making the curve drop instead of breaking on a level plane.

"He could use the slightest bit more control on the curve," said Miguel.

Instructional League coaches also worked with Julio on making him square up to the hitter after delivering the ball, to put him in a better fielding position.

Confident and composed, Julio seems extremely coachable, with a maturity that belies his 16 years.

Carlos Roque Garcia, the main Braves scout in Colombia, recruited uncle Miguel to coach what would become Julio's first baseball team. While Garcia remembers a calm five-year-old Julio, trying to make baseball players out of children generally means a lot of babysitting.

"It's not easy training a five-year-old boy when another is playing with sand and dirt," said Miguel.

"And if one strikes out, he bawls," said Garcia.

In these cases, a good trainer makes the difference.

"The trainer plays a critical role," explained Garcia, "because he sees the kid's qualities day to day."

As coach and uncle, no one has done more to shape Julio's pitching than Miguel Theran.

"Uncle Miguel was always very demanding," said Rafael Teheran, another of Julio's uncles.

Thanks to uncle Miguel's expertise, Julio usually earned a burger after ballgames from a food vendor that rewarded the best player. By age seven, the future Braves prospect was playing in national championships.

With such obvious talent, Julio had to grow up fast. When he vowed at 13 to become a pitcher, it meant keeping the temptations of his old neighborhood at bay.

"I used to play for fun," said Julio. "I stopped doing things that hurt me, like partying, and I didn't hang out on the street as much."

At 15, Julio impressed scouts at a world championship in Venezuela where he threw 90 mph. At one point, Miguel counted 24 of the 30 major league teams interested in his nephew.

When Julio played in an all-star game in February, scouts poured into Cartagena.

"They all came to see him," explained Garcia, "the most important prospect in Latin America."

As a sign of that interest, the Phillies scout, added Garcia, flew in at 1 p.m and flew out at 5 p.m. Julio gave up one hit and struck out five in three innings.

Top Braves scouts and front office figures, including Johnny Almaraz, director of scouting for Latin America, and José Martinez, special assistant to the general manager, flew to Venezuela to watch Julio throw in a tryout game at the team's baseball academy.

Julio pitched two innings, striking out four and hitting 92 mph with his fastball.

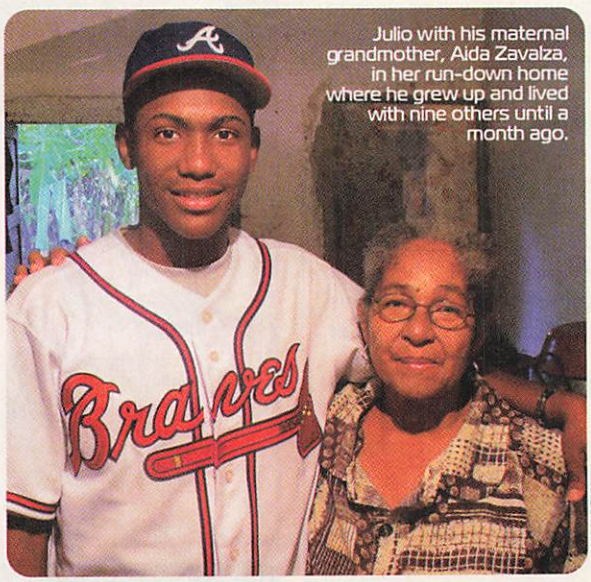
As the July 2 international signing date neared, the Teheran family entertained various serious offers. In the end, uncle Miguel's Braves connection, combined with the generous signing bonus, won over the family.

But the Braves also seemed like the kind of organization where Julio and cousin Mike could develop as ballplayers.

"I like the team because they give you the chance to move up faster," said Mike.

Julio, his father, and uncle Miguel traveled to Atlanta for the signing at Turner Field. They also visited the Coca-Cola headquarters, CNN, and Underground Atlanta.

Although the signing represents the culmination of years of work and sacrifice, the Teherans understand that the path to big league fame and fortune is only just starting.



Julio with his maternal grandmother, Aida Zavalza, in her run-down home where he grew up and lived with nine others until a month ago.

JOSÉ OROZCO

Julio's dad, for his part, stays on his son's back with advice to ensure the pitching phenom doesn't stray off that path like so many other young prospects.

"Some sign and get complacent," said the senior Teheran. "They hang out with the guys, drinking rum and having a good time. They end up dropping out of baseball.

"He knows that in baseball, you have to mature early," Julio's father continued, "because it's a short career, and you have to take advantage."

Julio says he understands, saying, "Sometimes, one gives in to temptation."

Indeed, dropping out of high school to dedicate himself to professional baseball leaves a lot of time to fill. The sad truth is that many teens like him drop out of school, as well, but with no signing bonus or promise in their lives. Julio not only has the bonus and baseball promise, but also will receive some tutoring from the Braves.

Where baseball was once enough to keep Julio out of trouble, a lot of down time requires new diversions like the Nintendo PlayStation.

"Julio plays the PlayStation for hours," said Pinto, Julio's mom. "His friends will come by, and they'll hang out in his room playing."

Video games help Julio take his mind off temptation. They also help reinforce pitching basics when he plays a baseball video game.

"I concentrate on what to throw," explained Julio, "looking for weaknesses in the hitters. I apply my knowledge."

Julio's age prohibits him from playing ball in the U.S. But he'll be running to the mound in a Braves uniform soon enough. He turns 17 in January.

For now, Julio enjoys what little teenage innocence his rapid ascent to baseball stardom allows. PlayStation, friends, his family's new home. As the first sign of what baseball can do for him and his family, the Teherans' new three-story home is like a beacon to poor families stuck in muddy ghettoes.

"I wanted a house for my family, so they'd be better off," said Julio. "I'm happy because they're happy."

But even coming from such dire poverty, money isn't everything. At age 5, before talk of bonuses and contracts, it was big league dreams that stirred little Julio.

"The dream is to be in the big leagues," he said. "The bonus isn't important."

Indeed, poor families appreciate the honor and fulfillment baseball brings. But there's no getting around the basic fact of needing or wanting things. And for that, making it onto a major league roster and staying there can make the dream all the richer.

"That's where the good life is, everything one wants," said Julio, speaking of the major leagues. "From there, you can help everyone. Over here, you see a lot of poverty.

"I liked Atlanta. That's my dream, to live over there with my family."

STATE OF THE FARM

THE WELL DEFINITELY IS NOT DRY, IN SPITE OF THE MASS DEPARTURE IN THE MARK TEIXEIRA TRADE

BY BILL BALLEW

ONE OF THE MORE FAMOUS QUOTES from Mark Twain, the noted writer and humorist, is his understated comment, "The report of my death was an exaggeration." The Atlanta Braves can relate.

While most fans focus on the efforts and results that occur at Turner Field during the regular season, the organization is constantly searching for and developing talented young players to help the major league team in the future. Sometimes that means trading a prospect or five for an established big leaguer or two, such as in late July when the Braves acquired Mark Teixeira and Ron Mahay from Texas for five of the game's more-heralded budding standouts.

Atlanta officials admitted at the time that the decision to part with Jarrod Saltalamacchia, Elvis Andrus, Matt Harrison, Beau Jones and Neftali Feliz was a difficult one. Meanwhile, many so-called experts suggested the Braves' farm system went bankrupt because of the trade. Yet, contrary to popular belief, the Braves continue to possess as much talent and depth as any other organization in the game.

Take the 2007 season, for example. Two years after promoting Jeff Francoeur and Brian McCann to Atlanta, Bobby Cox welcomed infielders Yunel Escobar and Scott Thorman and pitchers Peter Moylan and Jo-Jo Reyes to the game's top level. The 2008 season could produce a similar scenario with shortstop Brent Lillibridge and outfielders Brandon Jones and Jordan Schafer among those knocking on the door of the major leagues.

"We are extremely pleased with the talent our organization has produced and the direction we're headed with our player development operation," said new Braves general manager Frank Wren. "We're very aggressive in our scouting efforts, and we feel we have the best managers and coaches to get the most out of our young players' abilities. We have had great results in the past, and we expect that to continue."

Wren wasted no time practicing what he preaches. A week after he took over the GM duties from John Schuerholz in October, Wren and the Braves signed scouting director Roy Clark, director of player development Kurt Kemp and director of Latin American operations Johnny Almaraz to two-year contract extensions. He also hired as his right-hand man Bruce Manno, whose long resume includes 16 years overseeing the minor league operations of the Milwaukee Brewers.

The efforts of the recent past as well as the present have the future looking bright for the Braves. No organization is richer in left-handed pitching, particularly in the lower levels, than Atlanta. Jeff Locke and Cole Rohrbough overwhelmed Appalachian League hitters last summer, while fellow southpaws Steve Evarts, Chad Rodgers and Eric Barrett rank in the same prospect neighborhood. Right-handed prospects are none too shabby either, not with Tommy Hanson, Jamie Richmond and Jairo Cuevas making solid strides and youngsters Cory Rasmus and 16-year-old Julio Teheran in the beginning phases of their professional careers.

BILL SETLIFF

The Braves' last two No.-1 draft picks - Cody Johnson (L, 2006) and Jason Heyward (2007) - are two of the best power-hitting outfield prospects in baseball.

Catching ran dry in the organization earlier in the decade, but the Braves also are loaded behind the plate with Clint Sammons, Phillip Britton and Tyler Flowers working their way to the top. The 2007 draft brought an abundance of talented infield prospects, including hard-hitting cornermen Freddie Freeman and Jon Gilmore and middlemen Brandon Hicks, Michael Fisher and Travis Jones. More experienced infielders also further established themselves, headlined by shortstop/second baseman Diory Hernandez, second baseman Martin Prado, and power-hitting first baseman Kala Ka'aihue.

The 2007 draft also produced rightfielder Jason Heyward, an Atlanta-area product who somehow slid to the 14th overall pick.

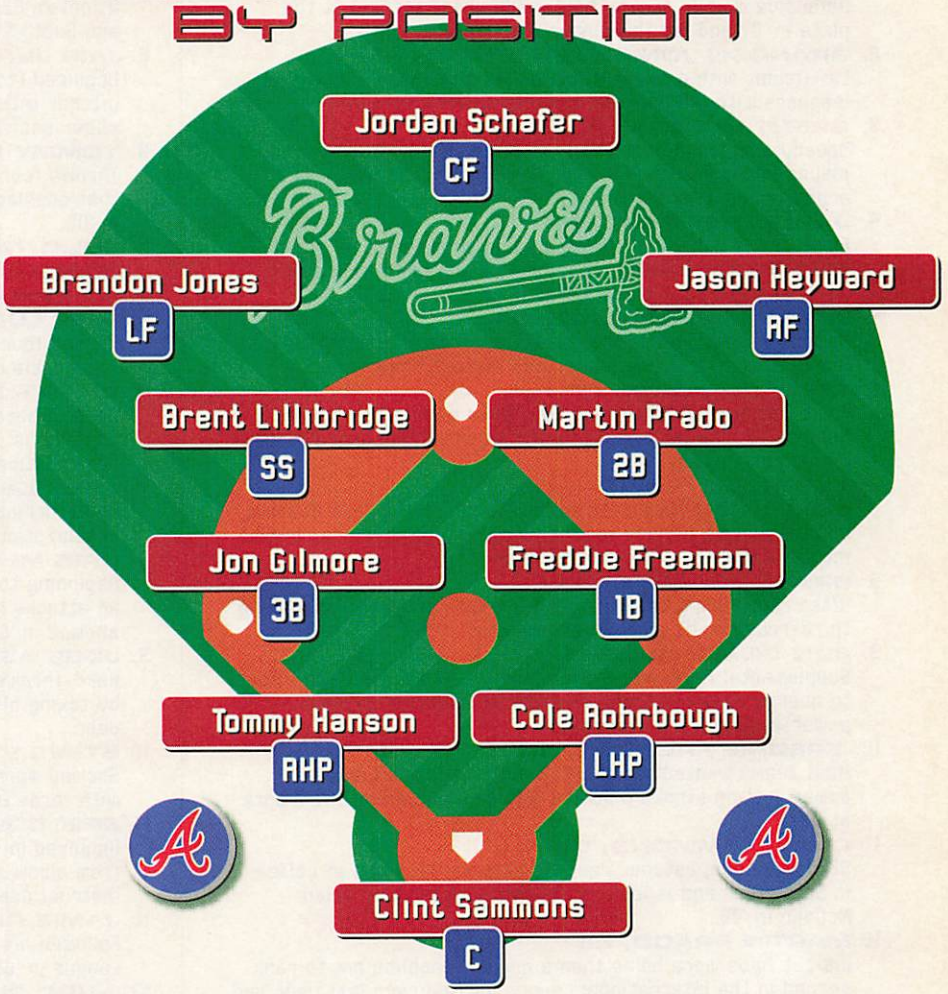
Even though Heyward has only 12 games of pro experience under his belt, he too could work his way into the Braves' major league plans before long.

"We felt Jason was the best position player in the draft, and after seeing him, we believe he is really something special," Clark said. "We believe that to be the case with a lot of guys. It's an exciting time for this organization. The baseball world may not realize it right now, but I believe you're going to see quite a few guys come out of our minor league system in the next few years and have a major impact in the big leagues."

The prospect depth already increased this off-season when Wren traded five-time All-Star shortstop Edgar Renteria to Detroit for pitcher Jair Jurrjens and outfielder Gorkys Hernandez. The Braves' confidence in Escobar's ability to play shortstop allowed this to happen. Jurrjens could make the Atlanta rotation at some point in 2008, and Hernandez, a traditional centerfielder, is a couple of years away after a very strong showing in the Class-A Midwest League last summer.

"We're always looking at every avenue to strengthen our team," Wren said. "Everything we do is done while considering the impact on our major league team today, as well as down the road. With the economics in the game today, it's imperative that our farm system continues to produce that pipeline of talent. In my opinion, that's the only way to have success."

TOP PROSPECTS BY POSITION



CHOPTALK'S TOP 10 PROSPECTS

1. **JORDAN SCHAFER**
   21, OF, Myrtle Beach, .312-15-63
2. **BRANDON JONES**
   24, OF, Atlanta, .291-19-104
3. **BRENT LILLIBRIDGE**
   24, SS, Richmond, .282-13-58
4. **JASON HEYWARD**
   18, OF, Danville, .302-1-6
5. **COLE ROHRBOUGH**
   20, LHP, Rome, 5-2, 1.17
6. **JAIR JURRJENS**
   21, RHP, Detroit, 7-5, 3.20
7. **CODY JOHNSON**
   19, OF, Danville, .305-17-57
8. **TOMMY HANSON**
   21, RHP, Myrtle Beach, 5-9, 3.32
9. **JULIO TEHERAN**
   16, RHP, Instructional League
10. **GORKYS HERNANDEZ**
    20, OF, W. Michigan (Class A), .293-4-50

(Player, age as of Opening Day 2008, position, highest level reached, composite '07 farm stats - (BA, HR, RBI for hitters; W-L, ERA for pitchers)

THE NEXT 20

11. **JEFF LOCKE**
    20, LHP, Danville, 7-1, 2.66
12. **TYLER FLOWERS**
    22, 1B/C, Rome, .298-12-70
13. **CHAD RODGERS**
    20, LHP, Danville, 3-1, 3.88
14. **BRANDON HICKS**
    22, SS, Rome, .285-7-28
15. **JOEY DEVINE**
    24, RHP, Atlanta, 6-4, 1.79
16. **JON GILMORE**
    19, 3B, Gulf Coast, .284-1-29
17. **FREDDIE FREEMAN**
    18, 1B, Gulf Coast, .268-6-30
18. **CLINT SAMMONS**
    24, C, Atlanta, .252-9-49
19. **STEVE EVARTS**
    20, LHP, Danville, 4-0, 1.95
20. **KRIS MEDLEN**
    22, RHP, Mississippi, 2-1, 1.53
21. **MARTIN PRADO**
    24, 2B, Atlanta, .313-4-43
22. **ERIC CAMPBELL**
    22, 3B, Myrtle Beach, .221-14-49
23. **DIORY HERNANDEZ**
    23, 2B/SS, Mississippi, .308-7-68
24. **VAN POPE**
    24, 3B, Mississippi, .223-6-43
25. **KALA KA'AIHUE**
    23, 1B, Mississippi, .251-22-69
26. **ERIK CORDIER**
    22, RHP (Low Class A; Injured in 2007)
27. **JAMIE RICHMOND**
    22, RHP, Rome, 7-6, 3.05
28. **JAIRO CUEVAS**
    24, RHP, Myrtle Beach, 6-12, 3.55
29. **PHILLIP BRITTON**
    23, C, Mississippi, .283-10-44
30. **ERIC BARRETT**
    21, LHP, Danville, 3-2, 1.75

TOP POSITION PLAYERS

1. **JORDAN SCHAFER, OF**
Defensive whiz in center field, made great strides at the plate in '07 and led the minors with 176 hits.
2. **BRANDON JONES, OF**
Leftfielder with a sweet swing paced all Braves' minor leaguers with 100 RBIs and reached Atlanta for the first time.
3. **BRENT LILLIBRIDGE, SS**
Speedy shortstop acquired from Pittsburgh last winter played in the Futures All-Star Game and paced the organization with 42 steals.
4. **JASON HEYWARD, OF**
First-round pick in the '07 draft had an impressive, albeit short, debut in rookie ball before looking like a man among boys during Instructional League.
5. **GORKYS HERNANDEZ, OF**
Named Midwest League MVP in '07, rated as the Class-A league's most-exciting player and fastest baserunner.
6. **CODY JOHNSON, OF**
First-round draft choice in '06 proved he hits the ball as hard as anyone by dominating the Appalachian League in all power categories.
7. **TYLER FLOWERS, 1B/C**
Knee surgery in March forced him to play first base at Rome, but the Braves believe this hard-hitting catcher can develop into an excellent defensive receiver.
8. **BRANDON HICKS, SS**
After revitalizing the Texas A&M baseball program last spring, third-round draft pick gave Rome a solid jolt.
9. **JON GILMORE, 3B**
Supplemental first-round draft pick in '07 turned down offers to quarterback in college football to be an old-school, power-hitting third baseman.
10. **FREDDIE FREEMAN, 1B**
Most teams wanted him to pitch, but the Braves love his power-hitting stroke from the left side and smooth footwork at first.
11. **CLINT SAMMONS, C**
Stellar fielding catcher reached Atlanta for a cup of coffee in September and is leading candidate to back up Brian McCann in '08.
12. **MARTIN PRADO, 2B**
His bat finds more holes than a gopher, enabling him to rank second in the International League batting race last year and raise career average to .300.
13. **ERIC CAMPBELL, 3B**
Hard-hitting third baseman looking to rebound after struggling at the plate and with injuries last year at Myrtle Beach.
14. **DIORY HERNANDEZ, SS/2B**
Steady shortstop proved he is equally efficient at second base while improved attitude led to best season of his career.
15. **KALA KA'AIHUE, 1B**
Farm system's most potent power hitter crushed Carolina League pitching before struggling after promotion to Mississippi in early August.
16. **VAN POPE, 3B**
The slick-fielder is looking to rebound after struggling in return home to Mississippi last season.
17. **PHILLIP BRITTON, C**
Unheralded receiver had an impressive season at the plate with Rome and continues to make steady strides with fielding.
18. **CARL LOADENTHAL, OF**
Speedy outfielder played steady defense in center while ranking second in the organization with 40 steals and seventh with a .300 batting average.
19. **SAMUEL SIME, SS**
Young Dominican showed solid glove while leading Atlanta's Gulf Coast League entry in most offensive categories.
20. **MICHAEL FISHER, SS**
Georgia Tech product was sixth-round draft pick in June who reached Myrtle Beach at season's end while spraying line drives to all fields.

TOP PITCHERS

1. **COLE ROHRBOUGH (L)**
Atlanta's 22nd-round pick in '06 dominated the Appalachian and South Atlantic leagues after signing on June 1.
2. **JAIR JURRJENS (R)**
Acquired from Detroit in the Renteria deal, a power pitcher with excellent command of 93-94 mph fastball, slider and changeup.
3. **TOMMY HANSON (R)**
Throws four pitches for strikes and has bulldog mentality that enabled him to lead the organization with 154 strikeouts in '07.
4. **JULIO TEHERAN (R)**
Signed in July as a 16-year-old out of Colombia, has an impressive fastball, changeup and breaking ball combination.
5. **JEFF LOCKE (L)**
Ranked fourth in the organization in ERA and showed impeccable command, walking only eight at Danville.
6. **CHAD RODGERS (L)**
Despite battling shoulder tendinitis late last season at Danville, is polished and has one of the best curveballs in the organization.
7. **JOEY DEVINE (R)**
By returning to his college mechanics, ranked second in the organization with 20 saves and made return to Atlanta.
8. **KRIS MEDLEN (R)**
Beginning to race up the organizational ladder due to the way he attacks hitters, resulting in only eight earned runs allowed in '07.
9. **JOSE ASCANIO (R)**
Hard-thrower proved back problems from '05 are in the past by taking his blazing fastball from Mississippi to Atlanta last year.
10. **STEVE EVARTS (L)**
Showed more maturity in '07 while pounding the strike zone with three above-average pitches.
11. **ERIK CORDIER (R)**
Acquired in spring training from the Royals, he's recovering from elbow surgery but looked impressive during Instructional League.
12. **JAMIE RICHMOND (R)**
Followed his Pitcher of the Year honors in the Appalachian League in '06 with a solid season at Rome.
13. **JAIRO CUEVAS (R)**
Had streaky season at Myrtle Beach but pitched much better than his 6-12 record, ranking ninth in the organization with a 3.55 ERA.
14. **ERIC BARRETT (L)**
A 31st-round pick in '06, signed just prior to the '07 draft and emerged as the team's most consistent pitcher in the Gulf Coast League.
15. **DAN SMITH (L)**
Injuries limited him during '07, but still made successful jump from Mississippi to Richmond.
16. **CODY GEARRIN (R)**
Sidearmer was fourth-round pick and intimidates hitters with his nasty slider and sharp-breaking fastball.
17. **KEVIN GUNDERSON (L)**
An Oregon State hero in the '06 College World Series, had an impressive season out of the Myrtle Beach bullpen.
18. **JOSE ORTEGANO (L)**
Soft-tosser kept hitters off-balance and led the organization, as well as the rookie Appalachian League, with a 1.48 ERA.
19. **EDGAR OSUNA (L)**
Did solid job bouncing between the Danville bullpen and rotation, giving up more than one earned run in only two of 13 outings.
20. **NICK FELLMAN (R)**
After leading NCAA Division II in saves in '06 and posting 14 more last spring, joined the Braves as a 12th-round draft pick and led the Appy League with 16 saves.

BY BILL BALLEW

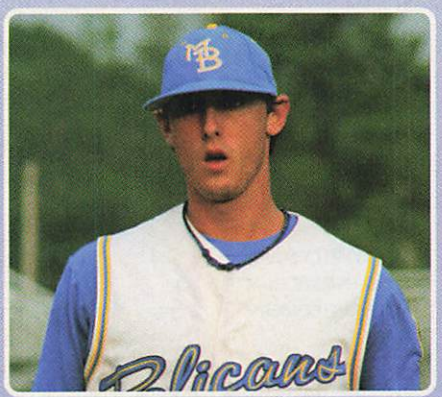
SCHAFER, BENNETT AMONG PLAYERS MAKING WINTER BALL IMPRESSIONS

NEW GENERAL MANAGER Frank Wren is considering all options to fill the void in center field created after the Braves announced in early October that free agent Andruw Jones would not be re-signed. Among those considerations is a pair of players making the most of their opportunities in winter ball.

Jordan Schafer, regarded as the top outfield prospect in the Braves' farm system, is capping a remarkable year with a strong performance in the Arizona Fall League. Through his first 76 at-bats with the Peoria Javelinas, Schafer ranked seventh in the league with a .355 batting average. He also was first with 18 runs scored, third with 27 hits, and tied for fourth with six doubles.

Schafer's showing in Arizona comes on the heels of a regular season in which he paced the minor leagues with 176 hits and ranked third with 49 doubles. He also batted a combined .312-15-63 between stops at Class A Rome and Myrtle Beach while playing excellent defense in center field.

"Is he in our organization?" Wren joked with a grin. "Obviously, Jordan had a great season and has continued that this fall. He's an outstanding young player who has really established himself in a short period of time."



BILL BALLEW

Jordan Schafer is continuing to play in Arizona like he wants to be fast-tracked to Atlanta.

While Schafer may be the long-term replacement for Jones, he is likely to spend most of 2008 working on his skills in the upper reaches of the minor leagues.

Gregor Blanco, meanwhile, has two years of Triple-A experience under his belt and is putting together a strong effort with La Guaira in the Venezuelan Winter League. Blanco ranked fourth in the league with a .377 batting average through his first 20 games. He also scored 20 runs while hitting two home runs and driving in five.

Blanco's strong start in his native country comes on the heels of a 2007 season in which he led the International League with 81 runs scored and helped the R-Braves to the Governors Cup title by hitting .282 with 23 stolen bases. Blanco still has some improvements to make, particularly with his baserunning, but he is a true leadoff hitter who works deep into counts and plays above-average defense in center field.

"I think Blanco is at a point where he needs to put in the effort to be a complete ballplayer," said Richmond manager Dave Brundage. "He has the ability, and he is a remarkable two-strike hitter. If he can polish some things, like getting better jumps on stolen base attempts by reading the pitchers, he could contribute in the big leagues."

Another candidate for the Atlanta roster is also having success in Venezuela. Jeff Bennett, who went 2-1 with a 2.15 ERA in 29 1/3 innings in September, owned a 2-1 record with a 1.80 ERA through five starts with La Guaira. Bennett is building on an impressive showing with Richmond and could be a challenger for the fifth starter's role or a bullpen spot during spring training.

The Mexican Pacific League is hosting a few Braves farmhands due to the recruiting efforts of Richmond outfielder Doug Clark. While Clark batted .309 with four homers and 10 RBIs in his first 24 games this winter, teammate Brandon Jones was hitting at a .289 clip with a home run and eight RBIs in his initial 22 games. Jones had a breakthrough season at Richmond and Double-A Mississippi last season by driving in 100 runs and is considered to be a candidate for the left field job in Atlanta.

A sleeper pick for a big league job in 2008 is righthander Kris Medlen, who continued to overpower hitters in Hawaiian Winter Baseball. The reliever ranked fifth in the league with a 1.88 ERA and allowed only 10 hits in 14 1/3 innings while striking out 27. Medlen also had an impressive 2007 regular season while pitching with three minor league teams, allowing only eight earned runs in 47 innings.

"Medlen was incredible while he was here," said Myrtle Beach manager Rocket Wheeler. "That kid is the definition of a bulldog. He's fearless. He challenges hitters as aggressively as anyone you'll see."

NOTES

Danville outfielder **Cody Johnson** was named the Short-Season Offensive Player of the Year by Minor League Baseball. Johnson led the Appalachian League with 17 home runs, 153 total bases, 40 extra-base hits and a .630 slugging percentage.

Richmond pitcher **Paul Bush** was inducted into the Georgia Southwestern State University Hall of Fame. Bush, who is recovering from elbow surgery, holds numerous school records, including most career victories with 34.

The Myrtle Beach Pelicans are the Carolina League entry for the Larry MacPhail Promotional Trophy, an annual award presented to the minor league team that displays extraordinary promotional efforts both on and off the field.

FARM SCHEDULES

RICHMOND
INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE
TRIPLE A

THE DIAMOND
(800) 849-4627
RBRAVES.COM

APRIL
3-6	ROCHESTER
7-10	BUFFALO
11-14	AT LEHIGH VALLEY
15-18	AT ROCHESTER
19-21	CHARLOTTE
23-24	AT NORFOLK
25-27	NORFOLK
28-30	AT DURHAM

MAY
1-4	LOUISVILLE
5-8	INDIANAPOLIS
9-12	AT LOUISVILLE
13-16	AT INDIANAPOLIS
17-18	NORFOLK
20-21	AT NORFOLK
22-25	DURHAM
26-29	SYRACUSE
30-31	AT CHARLOTTE

JUNE
1-2	AT CHARLOTTE
3-6	AT DURHAM
7-8	NORFOLK
10-13	SCRANTON/ WILKES-BARRE
14-17	CHARLOTTE
19-22	AT SYRACUSE
23-26	AT PAWTUCKET
27-28	CHARLOTTE
29-30	DURHAM

JULY
1-3	AT NORFOLK
4-5	NORFOLK
6-9	PAWTUCKET
10-13	AT CHARLOTTE
14-16	ALL-STAR BREAK
17-20	AT BUFFALO
21-24	AT SCRANTON/ WILKES-BARRE
25-28	LEHIGH VALLEY
29-31	COLUMBUS

AUGUST
1	COLUMBUS
2-3	AT NORFOLK
4-7	DURHAM
8-11	AT DURHAM
12-13	AT CHARLOTTE
15-18	TOLEDO
19-22	AT COLUMBUS
23-26	AT TOLEDO
27-28	CHARLOTTE
29-30	AT NORFOLK
31	NORFOLK

SEPTEMBER
1	NORFOLK

MISSISSIPPI
SOUTHERN LEAGUE
DOUBLE A

TRUSTMARK PARK
(888) 272-8374
MISSISSIPPIBRAVES.COM

APRIL
3-7	AT HUNTSVILLE
9-13	MOBILE
14-18	AT BIRMINGHAM
19-23	HUNTSVILLE
24-28	AT MOBILE
30	CHATTANOOGA

MAY
1-4	CHATTANOOGA
5-9	AT WEST TENN
10-14	MONTGOMERY
15-19	AT CHATTANOOGA
20-24	AT TENNESSEE
26-30	WEST TENN
31	BIRMINGHAM

JUNE
1-4	BIRMINGHAM
5-9	AT MOBILE
11-15	TENNESSEE
17-22	AT MONTGOMERY
24-29	BIRMINGHAM
30	AT MONTGOMERY

JULY
1-3	AT MONTGOMERY
4-7	CHATTANOOGA
8-12	AT JACKSONVILLE
13-15	ALL-STAR BREAK
16-20	CAROLINA
22-26	AT BIRMINGHAM
27-31	CHATTANOOGA

AUGUST
1-5	AT HUNTSVILLE
6-10	JACKSONVILLE
11-16	AT MOBILE
18-22	AT CAROLINA
23-27	MOBILE
28-31	WEST TENN

SEPTEMBER
1	WEST TENN

MYRTLE BEACH
CAROLINA LEAGUE
ADVANCED A

BB&T COASTAL FIELD
(877) 918-8499
MYRTLEBEACHPELICANS.COM

APRIL
4-7	AT WILMINGTON
8-10	AT POTOMAC
11-13	FREDERICK
14-16	WINSTON-SALEM
17-20	AT KINSTON
21-23	LYNCHBURG
24-26	SALEM
28-30	AT LYNCHBURG

MAY
2-4	AT SALEM
5-7	POTOMAC
9-11	AT WILMINGTON
12-15	AT POTOMAC
16-18	WILMINGTON
20-22	KINSTON
23-25	AT FREDERICK
26-29	AT WINSTON-SALEM
30-31	FREDERICK

JUNE
1	FREDERICK
2-5	WINSTON-SALEM
6-8	AT KINSTON
9-11	LYNCHBURG
12-15	SALEM
17-19	AT SALEM
20-22	AT LYNCHBURG
23-25	ALL-STAR GAME AT MYRTLE BEACH (24TH)
26-28	POTOMAC
29-30	AT FREDERICK

JULY
1	AT FREDERICK
2-4	AT POTOMAC
5-7	WILMINGTON
9-11	SALEM
12-15	AT POTOMAC
17-19	AT WINSTON-SALEM
20-23	POTOMAC
25-27	WINSTON-SALEM
28-30	AT KINSTON
31	LYNCHBURG

AUGUST
1-3	LYNCHBURG
4-6	KINSTON
7-10	AT LYNCHBURG
11-13	AT SALEM
14-17	POTOMAC
18-20	AT WILMINGTON
21-23	AT WINSTON-SALEM
24-27	WILMINGTON
29-31	KINSTON

ROME
SOUTH ATLANTIC LEAGUE
CLASS A

STATE MUTUAL STADIUM
(706) 368-9388
ROMEBRAVES.COM

APRIL
3-6	CHARLESTON
7-10	COLUMBUS
11-14	AT CHARLESTON
15-16	AT COLUMBUS
18-21	SAVANNAH
22-23	AT COLUMBUS
24-27	AT SAVANNAH
29-30	GREENVILLE

MAY
1-2	GREENVILLE
3-6	AT AUGUSTA
7-10	AT GREENVILLE
12-15	AUGUSTA
16-19	HICKORY
20-23	AT ASHEVILLE
24-27	AT HICKORY
29-31	ASHEVILLE

JUNE
1	ASHEVILLE
2-5	AT CHARLESTON
6-8	COLUMBUS
9-12	CHARLESTON
13-15	AT COLUMBUS
16-18	ALL-STAR BREAK
19-22	SAVANNAH
23-24	AT CHARLESTON
25-27	AT SAVANNAH
28-29	AT COLUMBUS
30	COLUMBUS

JULY
1	COLUMBUS
3-6	AT ASHEVILLE
7-10	KANNAPOLIS
11-14	GREENSBORO
16-19	AT LEXINGTON
20-23	AT WEST VIRGINIA
25-28	AUGUSTA
29-31	GREENVILLE

AUGUST
1	GREENVILLE
2-5	AT HICKORY
6-9	AT CHARLESTON
11-14	HAGERSTOWN
15-18	LAKE COUNTY
20-24	AT SAVANNAH
25-27	AT COLUMBUS
28-29	CHARLESTON
30-31	COLUMBUS

SEPTEMBER
1	COLUMBUS

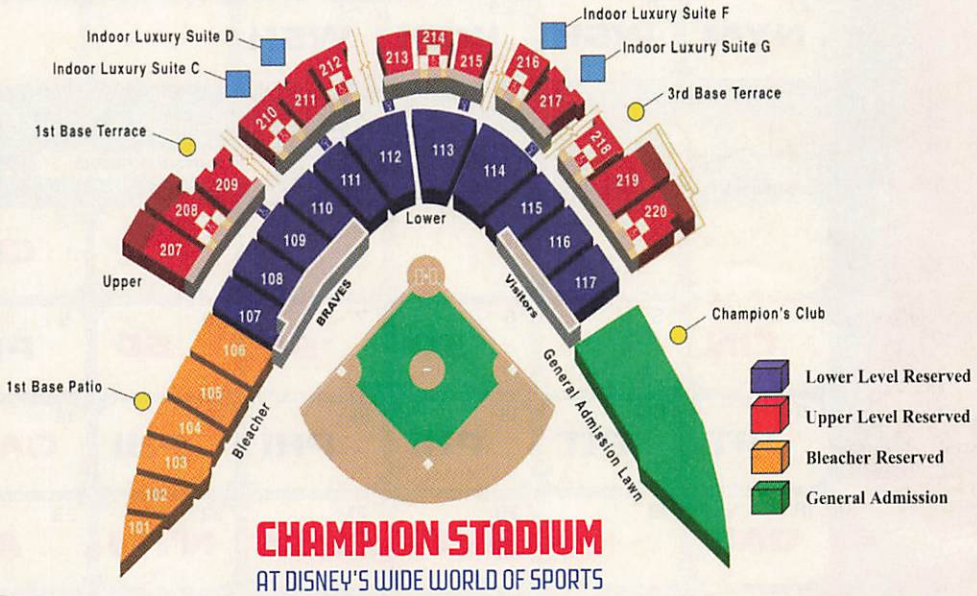
Braves SPRING TRAINING 2008

SPRING TRAINING TICKET INFO

Individual tickets for the 2008 Atlanta Braves Spring Training home games at Disney's Wide World of Sports complex in Lake Buena Vista, Fla., will go on sale Jan. 5 at Ticketmaster (407-839-3900), Ticketmaster.com and the Disney Wide World of Sports complex box office. At press time, price information for single tickets was not available.

Call (407) 939-GAME (4263) for additional information, including details on season and group tickets, or visit disneysports.com/atlantabraves. Season tickets are the same price as last year - $320 for Lower Level Reserved and $280 for Upper Level Reserved and Bleacher Reserved. Mini-plans are available for $102.50 (five games) and $61.50 (three games).

The schedule below is tentative, incomplete and subject to change. Game times pending. No broadcast information has been released.



CHAMPION STADIUM
AT DISNEY'S WIDE WORLD OF SPORTS

FEBRUARY/MARCH

DISNEY | AWAY

Tentative; subject to change; times pending.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			27 1:05 PM UNIV. OF GEORGIA	28 TBA	29 1:05 PM LA	1 HOU @ KISSIMMEE
2 1:05 PM HOU	3 TBA	4 1:05 PM PHI	5 CLE @ WINTER HAVEN	6 TBA	7 1:05 PM DET	8 1:05 PM HOU
9 1:05 PM STL*	10 1:05 PM STL	11 7:05 PM WAS	12 CLE @ WINTER HAVEN	13 DET @ LAKELAND	14 PHI @ CLEARWATER	15 1:05 PM TAM*
16 STL @ JUPITER	17 STL @ JUPITER	18 TBA	19 7:05 PM HOU	20 TBA	21 1:05 PM NYM	22 1:05 PM CLE
23 PIT @ BRADENTON	24 7:05 PM NYY	25 1:05 PM DET	26 HOU @ KISSIMMEE	27 1:05 PM CLE	28 CLE @ TURNER FIELD	29 CLE @ TURNER FIELD

* SPLIT SQUAD

TENTATIVE; SUBJECT TO CHANGE. TIMES, BROADCAST INFORMATION TO BE ANNOUNCED.
FOR SEASON, GROUP AND SUITE TICKET INFORMATION, CALL (404) 577-9100 OR VISIT braves.com

MARCH/APRIL

TURNER FIELD | AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	31 PIT OPENING DAY	1	2 PIT	3 PIT	4 NYM	5 NYM
6 NYM	7 COL	8 COL	9 COL	10 COL	11 WSH	12 WSH
13 WSH	14	15 FLA	16 FLA	17 FLA	18 LAD	19 LAD
20 LAD	21 WSH	22 WSH	23 FLA	24 FLA	25 NYM	26 NYM
27 NYM	28 WSH	29 WSH	30 WSH			

MAY

TURNER FIELD | AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2 CIN	3 CIN
4 CIN	5	6 SD	7 SD	8 SD	9 PIT	10 PIT
11 PIT	12 PIT	13 PHI	14 PHI	15 PHI	16 OAK	17 OAK
18 OAK	19	20 NYM	21 NYM	22 NYM	23 AZ	24 AZ
25 AZ	26 AZ	27 MIL	28 MIL	29 MIL	30 CIN	31 CIN

JUNE

TURNER FIELD | AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 CIN	2 FLA	3 FLA	4 FLA	5 FLA	6 PHI	7 PHI
8 PHI	9	10 CHI	11 CHI	12 CHI	13 LAA	14 LAA
15 LAA	16	17 TX	18 TX	19 TX	20 SEA	21 SEA
22 SEA	23 MIL	24 MIL	25 MIL	26	27 TOR	28 TOR
29 TOR	30					

JULY

ALL-STAR GAME | TURNER FIELD | AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 PHI	2 PHI	3 PHI	4 HOU	5 HOU
6 HOU	7 LAD	8 LAD	9 LAD	10	11 SD	12 SD
13 SD	14	15 ALL-STAR GAME YANKEE STADIUM	16	17	18 WSH	19 WSH
20 WSH	21 FLA	22 FLA	23 FLA	24	25 PHI	26 PHI
27 PHI	28 STL	29 STL	30 STL	31 STL		

AUGUST

TURNER FIELD | AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1 MIL	2 MIL
3 MIL	4 SF	5 SF	6 SF	7 AZ	8 AZ	9 AZ
10 AZ	11	12 CHI	13 CHI	14 CHI	15 SF	16 SF
17 SF	18 SF	19 NYM	20 NYM	21 NYM	22 STL	23 STL
24 STL	25	26 FLA	27 FLA	28 FLA	29 WSH	30 WSH
31 WSH						

SEPTEMBER

TURNER FIELD | AWAY

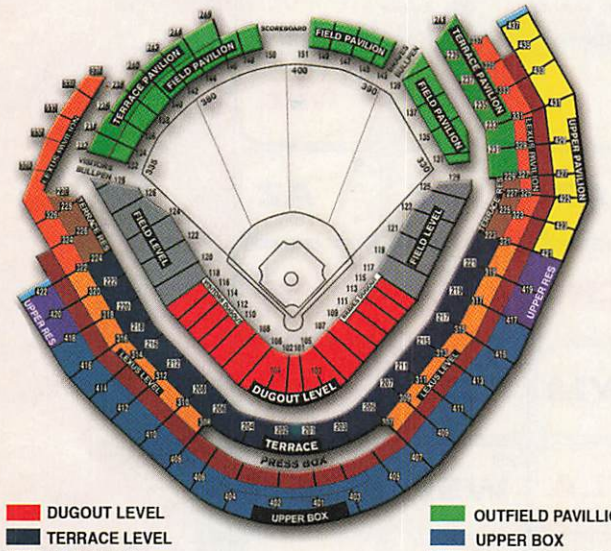
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 FLA	2 FLA	3 FLA	4 WSH	5 WSH	6 WSH
7 WSH	8	9 COL	10 COL	11 COL	12 NYM	13 NYM
14 NYM	15	16 PHI	17 PHI	18 PHI	19 NYM	20 NYM
21 NYM	22 PHI	23 PHI	24 PHI	25	26 HOU	27 HOU
28 HOU	29	30				

TICKETING

TO PURCHASE SEASON TICKETS OR FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL (404) 577-9100 OR VISIT braves.com

TICKET INFO

At press time, the Braves had not announced information about individual tickets for the 2008 season. Refundable deposits of $100 for full and partial season tickets are being accepted at Braves.com or by calling (404) 577-9100.



- DUGOUT LEVEL
- TERRACE LEVEL
- FIELD LEVEL
- LEXUS
- OUTFIELD PAVILLION
- UPPER BOX
- TERRACE RESERVED
- LEXUS PAVILLION
- UPPER PAVILION

MUSEUM & TOUR INFO

The Ivan Allen Jr. Braves Museum features more than 500 Braves artifacts that trace the team's history from its beginnings in Boston (1871-1952) to Milwaukee (1953-65) to Atlanta (1966-present). It is located on the northwest side of Turner Field at aisle 134. The museum opens two and a half hours before each game and closes in the middle of the seventh inning. The museum is open year-round and is the starting point of one-hour guided tours of Turner Field. Tours leave on the hour.

Tour reservations are not necessary for individuals or groups of less than 20 people. Tickets can be purchased the day of the tour at the main ticket window. Free parking in the Green lot.

Admission to the museum during games is one token ($2) and $5 on non-game days. Tour tickets are $10 for adults, $5 for children and $7 for groups of 20 or more. Walk-up tickets can be purchased at the ticket window. Groups of 20 or more and school groups must make reservations two weeks in advance by calling (404) 614-2311.

HOURS OF OPERATION

APRIL - OCTOBER	
Monday - Saturday	9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Sunday	1 - 3 p.m.
OCTOBER - MARCH	
Monday - Saturday	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
DEC. 23-JAN. 3	CLOSED

TOUR TICKETS

ADULTS	$10
CHILDREN 13 and Under	$5

*Subject to change

Tours not available when the Braves have afternoon home games

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Please notify us in writing of any address change so you don't miss a single issue of ChopTalk. Send your name, account number, old address and new address to: ChopTalk, P.O. Box 80750, Conyers, Ga. 30013-8750. Or you can e-mail us at Letters@ChopTalkonline.com. The post office will NOT do this for you.

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STAT PARADE 2007

STARTS BY POSITION

1B	THORMAN 66, TEIXEIRA 54, WILSON 17, SALTALAMACCHIA 11, FRANCO 10, WOODWARD 4.
2B	JOHNSON 127, ESCOBAR 20, PRADO 7, WOODWARD 6, ORR 2.
3B	C. JONES 126, ESCOBAR 19, ORR 7, WOODWARD 6, PRADO 4.
SS	RENTERIA 122, ESCOBAR 35, WOODWARD 5.
LF	DIAZ 77, HARRIS 69, LANGERHANS 11, B. JONES 5.
CF	A. JONES 153, HARRIS 9.
RF	FRANCOEUR 162.
C	McCANN 130, SALTALAMACCHIA 20, MILLER 6, PENA 5, SAMMONS 1.
P	HUDSON 34, SMOLTZ 32, JAMES 30, CARLYLE 20, DAVIES 17, REYES 10, CORMIER 9, REDMAN 5, LEREW 3, BENNETT 2.
DH	C. JONES 6, SALTALAMACCHIA 2, DIAZ 1.

STARTS BY BATTING ORDER (77 DIFFERENT LINEUPS)

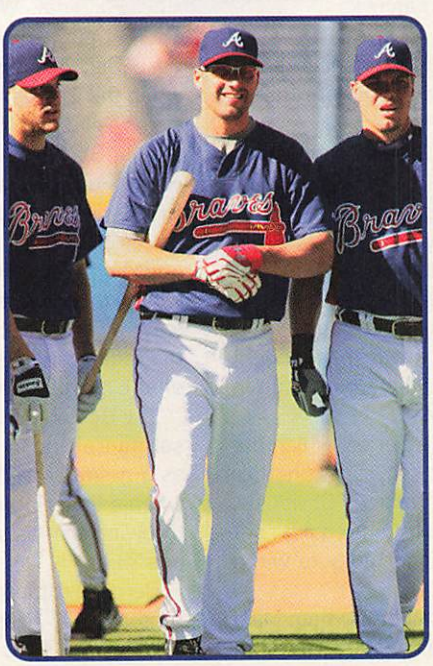
1	JOHNSON 76, HARRIS 45, ESCOBAR 34, WOODWARD 3, PRADO 3, DIAZ 1.
2	RENTERIA 90, JOHNSON 22, HARRIS 20, DIAZ 14, ESCOBAR 14, PRADO 2.
3	C. JONES 124, RENTERIA 32, FRANCOEUR 2, JOHNSON 2, McCANN 1, DIAZ 1.
4	A. JONES 86, TEIXEIRA 54, McCANN 8, C. JONES 8, FRANCOEUR 6.
5	MCCANN 73, FRANCOEUR 65, A. JONES 15, DIAZ 4, JOHNSON 3, THORMAN 2.
6	FRANCOEUR 83, McCANN 23, A. JONES 22, DIAZ 20, THORMAN 5, SALTALAMACCHIA 3, B. JONES 3, WILSON 1, WOODWARD 1, PRADO 1.
7	A. JONES 30, THORMAN 30, McCANN 22, DIAZ 21, SALTALAMACCHIA 19, JOHNSON 15, WILSON 7, FRANCOEUR 6, WOODWARD 4, ESCOBAR 2, PRADO 2, PENA 2, FRANCO 1, SAMMONS 1.
8	THORMAN 28, ESCOBAR 20, DIAZ 17, WOODWARD 12, SALTALAMACCHIA 11, LANGERHANS 11, HARRIS 11, WILSON 9, FRANCO 9, JOHNSON 9, ORR 8, MILLER 6, PENA 3, McCANN 3, PRADO 3, B. JONES 2.
9	HUDSON 32, SMOLTZ 30, JAMES 29, CARLYLE 19, DAVIES 15, REYES 10, CORMIER 9, REDMAN 5, ESCOBAR 4, BENNETT 2, LEREW 2, HARRIS 2, THORMAN 1, ORR 1, WOODWARD 1.

2-OUT RBIs

FRANCOEUR	43
McCANN	41
JOHNSON	36
A. JONES	36
C. JONES	28
RENTERIA	25
TEIXEIRA	18

MULTI-HOMER GAMES

TEIXEIRA	3
C. JONES	2
RENTERIA	2
JOHNSON	2
DIAZ	1
FRANCOEUR	1
McCANN	1
SALTALAMACCHIA	1
THORMAN	1



MULTI-HIT GAMES

FRANCOEUR	53
C. JONES	46
RENTERIA	46
JOHNSON	39
McCANN	37
ESCOBAR	33
DIAZ	31
A. JONES	27
HARRIS	22

MULTI-RBI GAMES

C. JONES	33
FRANCOEUR	28
A. JONES	25
McCANN	23
RENTERIA	16
JOHNSON	15
TEIXEIRA	14
DIAZ	10

LONGEST HITTING STREAKS GAMES, AVG.

RENTERIA	18	.349 (29/83)
TEIXEIRA	12	.422 (19/45)
C. JONES	12	.353 (18/51)
MCCANN	12	.349 (15/43)
TEIXEIRA	11	.435 (20/46)
JOHNSON	11	.350 (14/40)
C. JONES	10	.415 (17/41)
C. JONES	10	.400 (16/40)
HARRIS	10	.347 (16/47)
A. JONES	10	.308 (12/39)

GRAND SLAMS

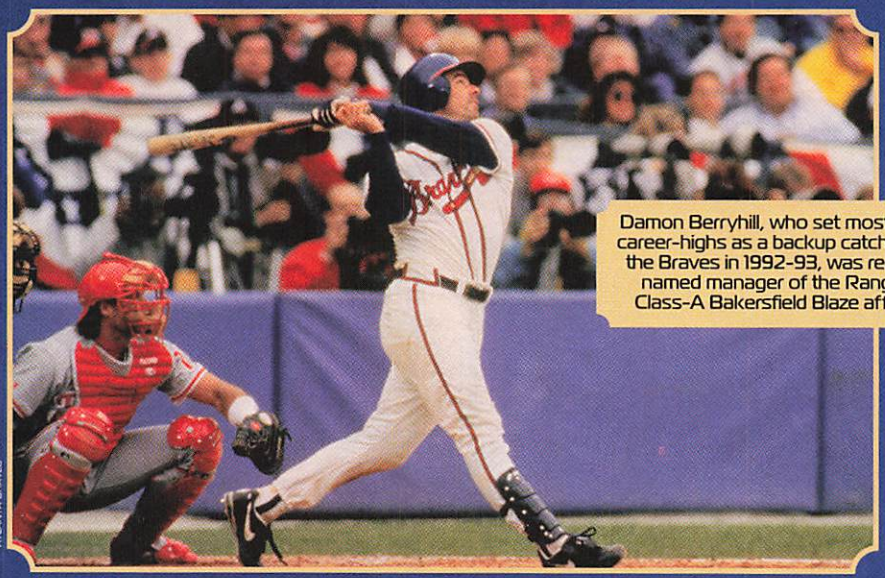
McCANN	2

LEADOFF HOMERS

JOHNSON	3
ESCOBAR	1

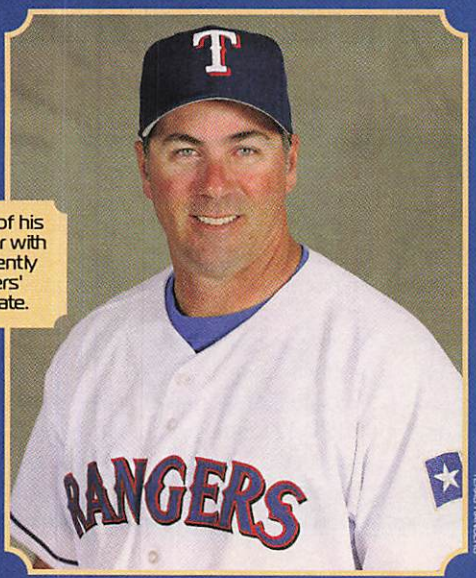
PINCH-HIT HOME RUNS

THORMAN	2
WOODWARD	1



ATLANTA BRAVES

Damon Berryhill, who set most of his career-highs as a backup catcher with the Braves in 1992-93, was recently named manager of the Rangers' Class-A Bakersfield Blaze affiliate.



TEXAS RANGERS

CATCHING ON

Berryhill Moving Up Coaching Ladder in Rangers Organization

BY BRIAN KNAPP

ON PAPER, the meeting was a mismatch - the winningest pitcher of the 1980s against the light-hitting catcher who'd never hit a post-season home run. As Damon Berryhill settled in for his third at-bat against Toronto veteran Jack Morris on Oct. 17, 1992, he held the fate of Game 1 of the World Series on his bat. A crowd of nearly 52,000 fans at Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium and a sea of red tomahawks provided the backdrop.

The Braves trailed, 1-0, in the sixth when Morris uncorked one of his trusted splitfinger fastballs that dangled more than it dived.

"It wasn't a good pitch," Berryhill said. "It was pretty much right in my wheelhouse." The former first-round draft choice hammered the mistake, sending the pitch screaming over the right field wall - a three-run homer that, along with Tom Glavine's complete game four-hitter, provided the difference in a 3-1 victory over the Blue Jays. Time seemed to stand still, as Berryhill circled the bases, the cool autumn night nipping at his heels.

"I just floated around the bases," he said. "It was the highlight of my career. That's what everybody's after, to hit a home run in the World Series that puts your team in the lead."

Berryhill delivered only one other hit in the Series, which the Braves lost in six games. Though he never played in another World Series, the experience had a lasting impact. "Obviously, you want to come out on the winning side of it," he said, "but that's what everybody is striving for – the opportunity to win a championship."

Acquired from the Chicago Cubs, along with batterymate Mike Bielecki, at the tail end of the miraculous 1991 season, Berryhill spent parts of three seasons in Atlanta, primarily as Greg Olson's backup. He emerged as the everyday catcher after Olson suffered a broken leg in a violent home plate collision with Astros third baseman Ken Caminiti late in 1992. "It was a situation where 'Olie' got hurt," Berryhill said. "I enjoyed playing every day. I thought I deserved to play every day. When you're with [Bobby Cox], you're going to play."

Berryhill appeared in a career-high 115 games a year later when the Braves roared to what was then a franchise-record 104 victories (106 in 1998) and a third straight post-season berth.

Still, Berryhill's days behind the plate were numbered. With a young Puerto Rican named Javy Lopez knocking on the door, the Braves allowed the South Laguna, Calif., native to walk away in December 2003.

"When Javy came in, they were looking for someone who was willing to sit and back him up," Berryhill said. "You never want to leave an organization where you're comfortable, especially when the organization is on top. But at that point in my career, coming off the playoffs, I didn't think they'd be able to sign me."

The Boston Red Sox agreed to terms with Berryhill just prior to spring training in 1994. He reached the post-season once more, as a member of the Giants three years later. He retired in 1998 when a lingering shoulder injury – he tore the rotator cuff in his throwing arm as a rookie in 1989 – forced him from the game at age 33.

Berryhill compiled a lifetime batting average of .240 with 47 home runs and 257 RBIs. He reached career highs with 10 home runs (1992) and 43 RBIs ('92 and '93) with Atlanta.

"I spent three weeks in Triple-A with Oakland," Berryhill said. "It was a situation where I couldn't break [camp] with the big club. My arm was not healthy. Three weeks into it, I ended up retiring."

He was not out of baseball for long. After returning home to California, Berryhill found work as an assistant high school baseball coach in Laguna Beach. His team made the playoffs for the first time in 63 years, and Berryhill's competitive fires were rekindled. He accepted a position as a hitting instructor with the Rancho Cucamonga Quakes in 2002, and became the catching coordinator for the Arizona Diamondbacks a year later. Coaching, as seems to be the case with many former catchers, suited him well.

"It comes with the experience of being close to managers," Berryhill said. "You get a rhythm with your manager. You recognize situations when they come up. You get a feel for the pitcher. The catcher's so involved with what goes on out there."

For the past three seasons, Berryhill has served as catching coordinator for the Texas Rangers and continued to pass on the knowledge his mentors shared with him throughout his decade-long playing career. His responsibilities are many.

"I'm in charge of all the catchers in the organization," Berryhill said. "I go to minor league camp during spring training and place all the catchers where I feel like they should be. During the season, I travel to minor league affiliates for four to five days at a time and observe. We work on all drills, on calling games, on dealing with game situations."

At 44, Berryhill aspires to manage at the major league level someday.

"I think I'd be a good big league coach," he said.

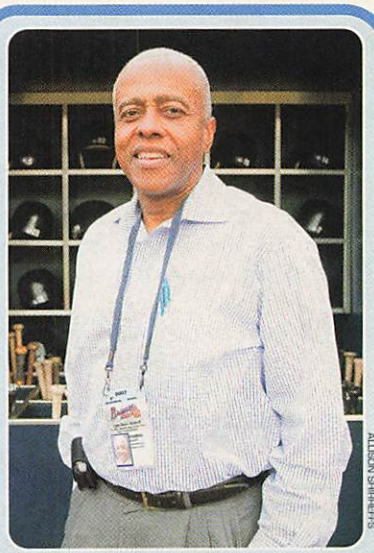
He took the first step toward that endeavor this off-season as manager of the Surprise Rafters in the Arizona Fall League. Berryhill expects to manage the Rangers' Class A affiliate in Bakersfield, Calif. in 2008.

"I definitely want the experience," he said. "I just enjoy being around kids and passing on the knowledge that was passed on to me. The game has changed a lot. These guys spend so much time working on their games. It's a pleasure to be around them."

Berryhill resides in Laguna, Calif., with his wife of 20 years, Anne, and their two teen-aged sons.

HOW I MADE IT TO THE MAJORS

DR. NORMAN ELLIOTT
HEAD TEAM PHYSICIAN


ALLISON SHIRREFFS

BY STEVE FALL

WHILE A RARE OCCURRENCE, medical emergencies can happen at any time during a baseball game. No matter what takes place at Turner Field, a Braves team physician is there ready to help.

"We've had to see people for heart issues," said Dr. Norman Elliott, the Braves' head team physician. "Mostly dealing with something called tachycardia, where your heart sort of runs away. There have been a number of them when the patients have become dizzy and we found that there were some heart issues involved."

The Braves have two types of team physicians - internists or medicine doctors, such as Elliott, and orthopedic surgeons. The latter take care of joint and ligament problems and muscle tears. The medicine doctors take care of everything else.

"Most of the time, it's like running a sick call," said Elliott. "You listen to the players and find out about eye infections, ear infections, and colds."

The Braves medical team includes five internal medicine physicians and three orthopedic surgeons that rotate home games. Although Elliott's only required to attend about 20 games per year, he comes to Turner Field more often.

"If you started working on a player and they have some medical issues, you may come back and forth several times to take care of that," he said.

Elliott, who graduated from Yale University School of Medicine in 1979, is careful not to use medicines with side effects that impact vision or cause dizziness. He cares for the umpires and visiting team during home games, as well. He also conducts insurance physicals every year during spring training.

"That's when you pick up on problems that you think may be long-term issues that the Braves need to know about, so that they can make adjustments to their plans if need be," said Elliott.

If a medical situation is beyond Elliott's field of expertise, he can turn to specialists from several different fields on the Braves medical team.

Elliott grew up as a Yankees fan in New York City. He played baseball until high school, then switched to softball. He attended the Air Force Academy, and served on active duty for five years. He flew Air Force planes in Vietnam and has continued his military service in the Air National Guard.

Elliott, 58, worked as the doctor at Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium for three years in the 1980s, and became a team physician in February 1992. He knew David Watson – the Braves' head team physician at that time – which helped him land the position.

Although internal medicine or general surgery training is necessary, there's no other specific background required to become a team physician.

"If you're interested, just be good at what you do," said Elliott, "because that's what many teams look for. They're not looking for a lot of the specialists. They want somebody that does a good job at what they do. If you're in internal medicine, you just have to be well-rounded and know when to refer. If you're an orthopedic surgeon, what they're looking for is a little different. There they want somebody with a sports medicine background. You can get much of that from doing fellowships once you've been trained in orthopedic surgery."

ALUMNI NOTES

- **Dale Murphy** (OF/1B/C, 1976-90) will be signing autographs Dec. 8 from 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at B.P. Sports Collectibles in the Atlanta suburb of Marietta. Phone and mail orders are accepted, too. Call (770) 333-0868. B.P. is located at 136 S. Park Square, Marietta, Ga. 30060.

- The San Diego area home of **David Justice** (OF/1B, 1989-96) was destroyed by wildfires that hit Southern California in October.

- **Greg Maddux** (RHP, 1993-2003), who ranks ninth all-time with 347 career wins, signed a one-year contract with San Diego.

- **Leo Mazzone** (Coach, 1985, 1990-2005) was fired as pitching coach of the Baltimore Orioles.

- **Marcus Giles** (2B, 2001-06) was put on waivers by the Padres.

REUTERS/JOHN SOMMERS II

Dusty Baker previously managed the Giants (1993-2002) and Cubs(2003-06).

- **Dusty Baker** (OF, 1968-75) was named manager by Cincinnati, and he retained **Brook Jacoby** (3B, 1981, '83) from the Reds' previous staff as his hitting coach.

- **Joe Torre** (C/1B, 1960-68) turned down a deal to return as Yankees manager on Oct.18, then was named manager of the Dodgers Nov. 5. Torre also was named the first recipient of the **Chuck Tanner** Manager of the Year Award given by the Rotary Club of Pittsburgh. The Nov. 17 awards banquet was to include a roast of Tanner (OF, 1955-57, Mgr. 1986-88), who recently was named a senior advisor by the Pirates. Torre also is working on a book about his life due to be released in the spring of 2009.

- **Jermaine Dye** (OF, 1996) was inducted into the Arizona Fall League Hall of Fame.

- **Brett Butler** (OF, 1981-83) was the featured speaker at the Columbia, S.C., Mayor's Prayer Breakfast Nov. 8.

- Former Braves president and general manager **John McHale** (1958-66) is on the Hall of Fame Veterans Committee ballot for executives. **Dave Johnson** (2B/1B, 1973-75), **Billy Martin** (2B, 1961), **Gene Mauch** (INF, 1950-51) and **Billy Southworth** (OF, 1921-23/Manager 1946-51) are on the Veterans Committee ballot for managers/umpires. The 16-member board voting on managers and umpires includes **Hank Aaron** (OF/1B, 1954-74), **Phil Niekro** (RHP, 1964-83, '87), **Bob Gibson** (Coach, 1982-84) and **Bob Watson** (1B, 1982-84).

- **Dave Johnson** (2B/1B, 1973-75) was manager of Team USA in the World Games played in Taiwan in November, and **Bob Watson** (1B, 1982-84) served as GM of the team.

- **Bob Rush** (RHP, 1958-60) will be inducted into the Indiana High School Baseball Coaches Association Hall of Fame Jan. 18 in Indianapolis.

- **Hank Aaron** (OF/1B, 1954-74) was the guest speaker when the Winston-Salem (N.C.) Warthogs held the groundbreaking ceremonies for a new baseball stadium Oct. 30. Aaron had knee surgery for torn cartilage, which put him on crutches during recovery.

- **Ted Simmons** (1B/C/3B, 1986-88) was named bench coach for the Milwaukee Brewers.

- **John Russell** (C, 1989) was hired as manager of the Pirates.

- Major League Baseball announced the creation of the **Hank Aaron** Chasing the Dream Foundation that will provide children with financial support and mentoring to pursue their dreams. The program provides for a perpetual endowment that will annually distribute 44 grants in honor of Aaron's jersey number (44). It will be entirely funded by MLB and is separate from the Hank Aaron Chasing the Dream Foundation founded in 1994 by Aaron and his wife, **Billye**.

- The 22nd **Joe Niekro** (RHP, 1973-74) Pro-Celebrity Golf Tournament to benefit Florida Southern baseball is scheduled Jan. 17 at Lakeland's Lone Palm Golf Course.

- **Norm Charlton** (LHP, 1998) was hired as bullpen coach of the Seattle Mariners.

- The late **Fred Lake** (C, 1891, '97, Mgr. 1910) was inducted into the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame Oct. 19.

- **Dave Martinez** (OF/1B, 2001) was hired by Tampa Bay as bench coach.

- **Hank Aaron** will be aboard the 15-day Crystal Serenity Panama Canal cruise from Miami to Los Angeles Jan. 4-19 to share insight into his life and career. Guests will have the opportunity to participate in a question and answer session with Aaron and to have their picture taken with him. For additional information, contact a travel agent or call 888-799-4625. Visit the luxury line's website at www.crystalcruises.com.

- Former Braves and current Houston Astros broadcaster **Milo Hamilton** suffered a heart attack in early October and was recovering in a Houston hospital.

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GARY CARUSO

EDITOR & PUBLISHER

THE MAN

WHEN THE NEWS FIRST BEGAN to break Oct. 11, the ground shook a little. The Braves were having a press conference to announce that John Schuerholz was stepping down as general manager.

Was he retiring? Certainly he wasn't leaving to go to another team?

Then the story began to develop, and the word came that he was staying with the Braves but in another position. Would he be semi-retired and stay connected with the club as a consultant or special assistant?

No, the full story finally came out that he was moving up to team president and being replaced at GM by Frank Wren. Whew!

For an hour or so, there was some uncertainty that was unsettling, to say the least. It's as difficult to imagine the Braves without Schuerholz calling the shots in the front office as it is imaging Bobby Cox not being in the dugout. Together they built and sustained an incomparable period of success in Braves history.

Well, the fact is that Schuerholz is no longer the decision maker on the baseball side of the franchise, but he's still there... and as president, he's got the final word, should he choose to exercise it.

That's not likely to happen, because Schuerholz has complete confidence in, and respect for, Frank Wren's ability to make the right decisions. But it's still comforting for those of us who live and die by every transaction, every game, sometimes every pitch, that *The Man* is still around to offer advice and counsel when he is asked to do so and to share his wealth of knowledge and experience as a sounding board should Wren need it.

As Schuerholz takes this step in his career, though, we should all take pause to reflect on his remarkable impact on this franchise that means so much to us, and we should thank him for what he has accomplished... literally against all odds.

If you don't understand why, you must have a short memory or be too young to remember life before 1991. Yes, of course, 1991 was "Worst To First." There will never be another season like it, but it was only the first chapter in an epic we'd like to believe is still being written 17-plus years later. That's the *really* remarkable story.

Schuerholz didn't just take the Braves from "Worst To First," he took them from being the absolute joke of baseball to being the finest organization - top to bottom, year in and year out - in the game.

The Braves were such a complete laughingstock in 1990, when they lost 97 games and finished last for the fourth time in five years, that people in the game literally were stunned when Schuerholz, successful and comfortable as GM in Kansas City, announced that fall that he was leaving the Royals to take the same position in Atlanta.

There is no denying that the Braves had a nucleus of talent that was developing under Cox, and there were those who felt the club was in position to begin to make improvement in the standings. But no one expected the Braves to become a perennial contender literally overnight, remaining at the top of the division for 14 straight completed seasons in spite of constant player turnover in an era more challenging than any that preceded it.

Schuerholz's story, however, goes far beyond wins and losses and championships. He accomplished the same thing in the front office and in the old stadium - and in the new ballpark - that he did on the field. He created structure and dignity and class and, most importantly, expectations of performance and success at all levels that previously weren't even on the radar.

John Schuerholz, as I have written before in this space, is the most significant person to serve the Braves in any capacity - on or off the field - since this franchise was formed in 1871. That is a load of unprecedented accomplishment for which all Braves fans should be eternally grateful.

THIS ISSUE OF CHOPTALK was mailed Nov. 21. The January issue will be mailed Dec. 20.

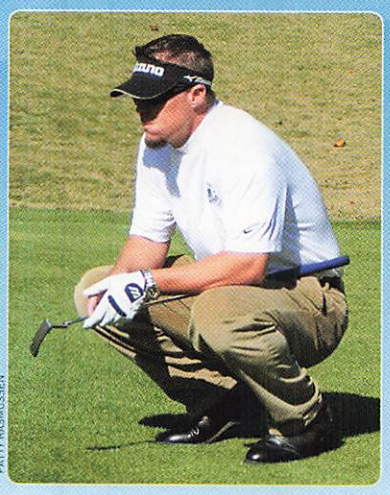
BEYOND BASEBALL

BY **PATTY RASMUSSEN**

Chipper Jones lines up a putt en route to helping his team win his own tournament for the second straight year.

HOST RULES

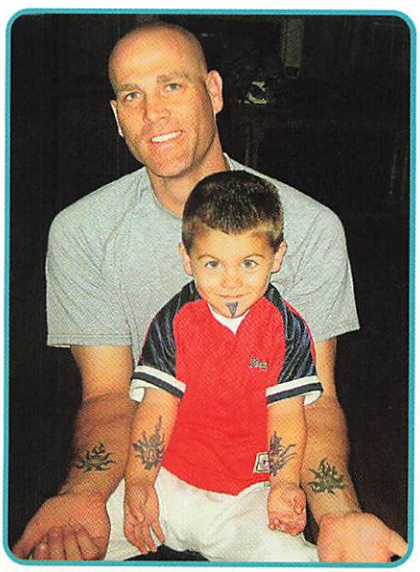
CHIPPER JONES HOSTED his annual Chipper Jones Family Foundation Celebrity Golf Invitational Nov. 4 and 5. Attendees at the Nov. 4 dinner enjoyed silent and live auctions and a comedy performance by **Jerry Farber**. Among the items auctioned, a six-person Kentucky Derby package that included seats for the race in an owner's box, hotel and airfare. The Derby package went for $12,500. The next day, 110 golfers took to the course, including Chipper and his father, **Larry Jones**, **Brian McCann**, **Kelly Johnson**, and **Blaine Boyer**, former Braves **Tom Glavine**, **Andruw Jones**, **Mark DeRosa**, **Greg McMichael**, **Zane Smith** and **Brad Clontz**, coaches **Terry Pendleton** and **Glenn Hubbard**, Los Angeles Angels catcher **Jeff Mathis**, and one of the Braves new pitchers, **Chris Resop**. McCann's older brother, **Brad**, a minor leaguer in the Kansas City Royals organization, also played. For the second year, though, the fivesome that included the tournament host, won the day, with a score of 55. An impromptu auction of signed baseball shoes, batting gloves and jerseys netted another $2,000 for the event. Jones thanked his guests, reminding them that he expected to see them again in 365 days.



PATTY RASMUSSEN

IT WASN'T SURPRISING that **Kade Hudson**, age 2 1/2, dressed as a baseball player for Halloween, but the youngster went even further when he wore a **Tim Hudson** jersey and sported replicas of his father's tattoos and "soul patch" on his chin! Tim drew the temporary tattoos on Kade using washable markers." ...

Andruw Jones and his wife, **Nicole**, hosted their annual Jaden's Ladder charity event, the Fairway Affair Gala and Celebrity Golf Tournament, Nov. 10-11. The gala, held Saturday evening at a private home in the Buckhead section of Atlanta, featured a performance of synchronized swimmers, a lively auction, and a performance by R&B artist **Keith Sweat**. Among the auction items were a pair of coveted **Hannah Montana** concert tickets, a framed and autographed **Michael Jordan** Chicago Bulls jersey, and the opportunity to have either PGA tournament golfer **Stewart Cink**, **John Smoltz**, Boston Red Sox catcher **Jason Varitek**, or Andruw as part of a golf foursome at the tournament the following day. The auction was completely overshadowed by a surprise duet performed by Sweat and event hostess, Nicole, who displayed outstanding vocal chops! Among the event's 300 guests were **Tim Hudson** and his wife, **Kim**, **Brian McCann** and fiancée, **Ashley Jarusinski**, Cink, Varitek, **Mark DeRosa** and his wife, **Heidi**, **Rena Millwood**, wife of former Braves pitcher **Kevin Millwood**, legendary college and NBA coach **Larry Brown**, former NBA player **Charles Oakley**, and Atlanta Falcons wide receiver **Brian Finneran**." ...



SPECIAL

Halloween fun: Will the real Tim Hudson please stand up?

Lynne Jones, Chipper's mother, missed her son's charity event due to her participation in the 2007 United States Dressage Federation Region 9 Championships and Southwest Dressage Championships Nov. 1-4 at Great Southwest Equestrian Center in Katy, Tex. Though she received a high score, 70 percent, on a Prix St. Georges dressage test from an Olympic judge, Lynne, with self-deprecating humor, called herself the "queen of second place all week," the result being "enough red ribbon to decorate the ranch for Christmas!"...

And speaking of the ranch, **Chipper** returned to the Double Dime in Carrizo Springs, Tex., the Thursday after his tournament to lead a hunt that was purchased in an auction at the 2006 golf tournament. Lynne said the hunting season was in full swing in Texas. In January, Chipper's agent and close friend, **B.B. Abbott**, will take a group of his clients, including **Chuck James** and former Braves pitcher (now Detroit) **Macay McBride**, to the ranch for the final hunt of the season...

Congratulations to **Mark Teixeira** and his wife, **Leigh**, on the birth of their daughter, **Addison Leigh**. Addison was born Oct. 10 in Bedford, Tex., and weighed in at 7 pounds, 3 ounces. The Teixeiras also have a son, **Jack** (20 months old),

PATTY RASMUSSEN

Nicole and Andruw Jones at their Jaden's Ladder charity event with Brian McCann and his fiancee, Ashley Jarusinski.

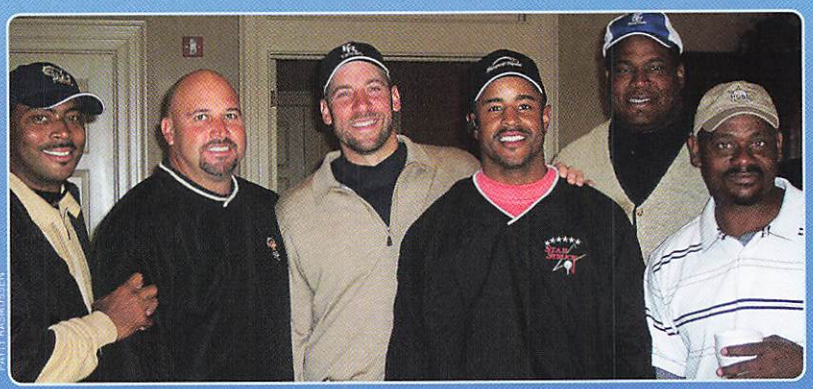
and make their off-season home in Westlake, Tex., a suburb of Arlington...

Brian McCann was a featured host at the inaugural Rally Foundation Benefit Bash to Strike Out Childhood Cancer. The event was held Nov. 15 at the Egyptian Ballroom at the Fox Theater in Midtown Atlanta and featured an MVP cocktail reception, a silent and live auction, a comic performance by **Kenn Kingston**, and live music...

The 25th Annual Hit 'em for Hemophilia Golf Tournament hosted by Braves director of team travel and equipment manager **Bill Acree** was a huge success. The tournament, held Oct. 30, filled the three courses at Chateau Elan Resort and Winery in Braselton, Ga. Among the tournaments 300 golfers were new general manager **Frank Wren**, **Bobby Cox**, coaches **Glenn Hubbard**, **Brian Snitker**, **Chino Cadahia**, Hall of Famer **Phil Niekro**, broadcasters **Ernie Johnson** and **Joe Simpson**, and former players **Mark Lemke**, **Brian Jordan**, **Zane Smith**, **Alejandro Pena** and **Charlie Leibrandt**. Acree said in the tournament's first year they grossed about $10,000. "And I think $6,000 of that was (then manager) **Joe Torre**'s fees!" said Acree. The tournament has grown substantially, with all money going for hemophilia research. Last year the tournament presented its inaugural "Ernie Johnson Sr. Award" which was given to the award's namesake. This year's award went to Niekro. "He's done so much for us," said Acree. "He's always here, he donates items for auction. He's a great guy."...

Tim and **Kim Hudson** were unable to attend the Nov. 3 wedding of **Jeff** and **Catie Francoeur** due to their previous engagement, hosting the 3rd Annual Celebration of Wishes Gala benefiting the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Georgia and Alabama. "It was a great night," said Kim. "They raised over $330,000, enough to grant 53 wishes!" The highlight of the evening was the granted wish of **Abby Fields**, a 19-year-old woman who successfully battled Hodgkin's Lymphoma. Her wish was to be a recording artist. "With the help of Make-A-Wish, she signed a contract with 1720 Entertainment, a real record label," said Kim. "They focus on finding inspirational, non-traditional artists, from any music genre. Abby sang two of her songs at the gala. Her music should be on iTunes in mid-November."...

Tim Hudson served as the "official witness" in a Nov. 12 attempt to set the world record for the "World's Largest Toy Drive," by Walden Media, Fox Walden and Toys for Tots. The organizations joined to collect over 12,000 pounds of toys from Nov. 6-12 at several "weigh-ins" in cities across the United States. The toy drives are tied into the opening of the movie 'Mr. Magorium's Wonder Emporium,' and for his participation, Hudson received 100 toys and a screening of the movie for his two favorite charities, Make-A-Wish and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.



PATTY RASMUSSEN

John Smoltz (center) at Brian Jordan's golf tournament with former Braves (L-R) Bernard Gilkey, Fredi Gonzalez, Jordan, Steve Wallace (NFL) and Marquis Grissom.

ACE FOR THE ACE

JOHN SMOLTZ had a big golf day on Oct. 30, when he got a hole-in-one on a par 4 hole at the ultra-exclusive Shadow Creek Golf Course in Las Vegas. The course was ranked No. 15 in the United States in 2007 by the editors of Golf Digest. Smoltz started his day playing a round with former teammate **Greg Maddux**, who has a home in Las Vegas. After their morning round, Smoltz went on to his second round of the day with other friends in the area. He made his remarkable 335-yard shot at the 11th hole.

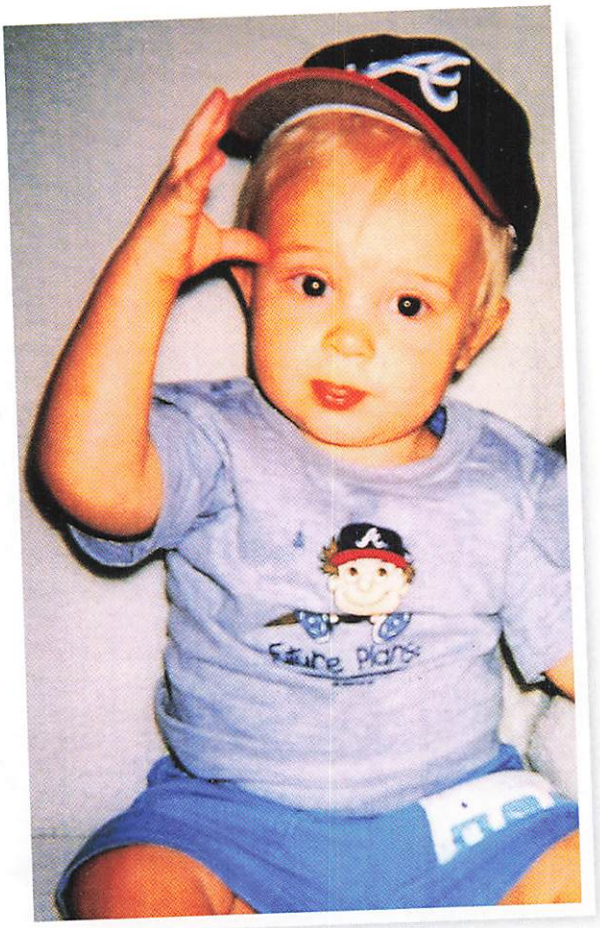
"It was my fourth hole-in-one," said Smoltz, "but the first I ever got on a par 4." Smoltz said the green was situated on a hill and that the ball had to land perfectly. "It was as much of an 'island shot' as you can have without water," he said. "It landed right on the green and rolled about 15 feet into the cup."

Smoltz's Vegas trip followed an earlier golf trip to St. Kitts. It was his first time visiting the Caribbean island. He played with a group of friends in a loosely configured tournament. Smoltz also participated in tournaments closer to home including the Oct. 29 **Jim Beauchamp** Celebrity Golf Classic benefiting Southwest Christian Care, a hospice in the Atlanta area, the Nov. 11 Fairway Affair Celebrity Golf Tournament, hosted by former teammate **Andruw Jones**, and the Nov. 12 **Brian Jordan** Foundation Celebrity Golf Classic hosted by Jordan. "It would be hard to top that hole-in-one, though," said Smoltz.

TALKIN' CHOP

LETTERS & PHOTOS FROM OUR READERS

WHETHER YOU'RE HAVING FUN AT TURNER FIELD, EXPERIENCING A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH YOUR FAVORITE BRAVES PLAYER, OR JUST SHOWING OFF YOUR COLLECTION OF BRAVES STUFF OR TRYING ON YOUR NEW BRAVES SHIRT, WE WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT AND SEE A PICTURE.



BORN TO BE BRAVE

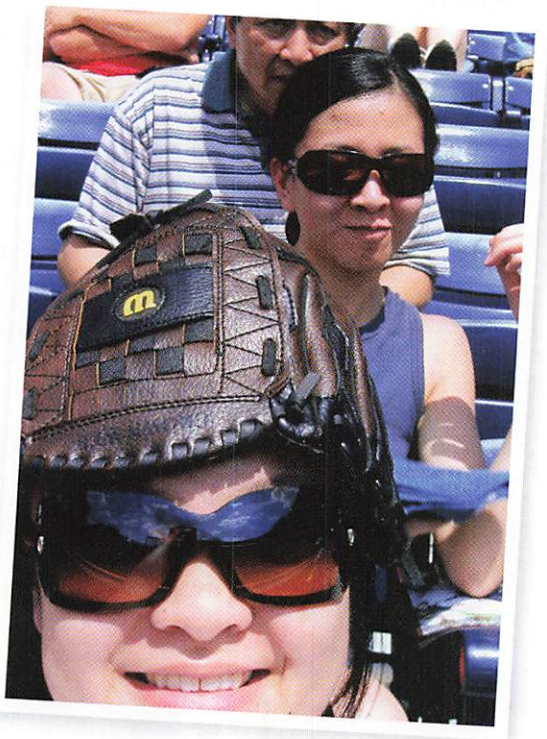
This is 1-year-old Iain Thomas Embry, a fourth-generation baseball fan. His great grandpa, grandpa, and dad all played baseball. His dad was a catcher from tee-ball through college. We all love the Braves. I watch every game and look forward to reading ChopTalk from cover to cover each month. There's no place like Turner Field to watch a game, and we were in Washington to see the Braves Sept. 14-16. Maybe someday my great grandson will be a Brave!

DORIS CUBLEY
Newport News, Va.

CENTERFOLD FAN

You've really done it this time! I remove the centerfold pictures and pin them on the wall in my hallway... I even talk to them now and then. What a thrill to get David Justice, one of my very favorite Braves, in the August issue. Now I'd be completely happy to have one of Javy Lopez. He had the smoothest home run swing ever. Thanks for my gallery!

EDITH ROBERTSON
Wendell, Idaho



MISSISSIPPI OBSESSION

This is a picture of my dad, Ronald, my sister, Melanie, and me at the May 26 Braves vs. Phillies game. Because I love the Braves so much, my mom, dad and sister drive over seven hours into the wee hours of the night just to watch "my boys" play. Although we have an 0-4 record in games we attended, I wouldn't trade my ballpark experiences for anything in the world! I just want to say "thanks" to my parents for allowing me to continue on with my Braves obsession - you are the best! We also enjoy the Mississippi Braves farm team. Thanks to the entire Braves organization for bringing the best baseball to the South.

BRITTANY DONG
Webb, Miss.

CHOPTALK AND THE ATLANTA BRAVES SUPPORT OUR TROOPS

SHOW YOUR BRAVES HOLIDAY SPIRIT... ...AND WIN FABULOUS PRIZES!

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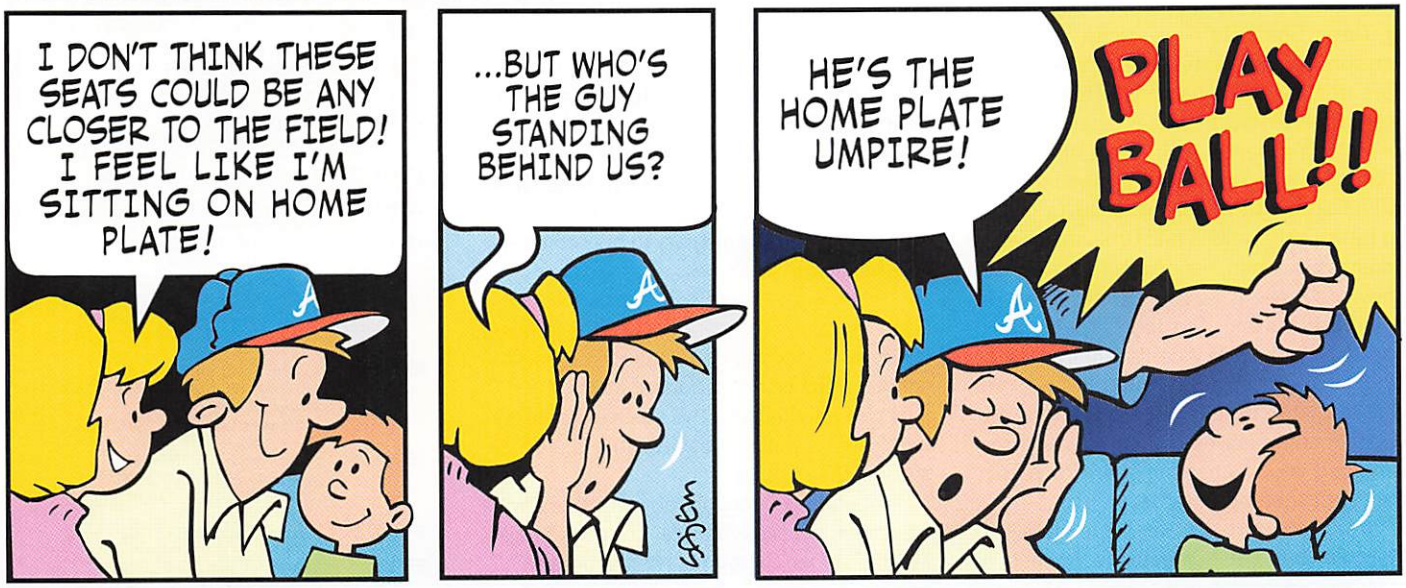
THE NEW DUGOUT CLUB VIEW!


I DON'T THINK THESE SEATS COULD BE ANY CLOSER TO THE FIELD! I FEEL LIKE I'M SITTING ON HOME PLATE!
...BUT WHO'S THE GUY STANDING BEHIND US?
HE'S THE HOME PLATE UMPIRE!
PLAY BALL!!!

SMOLTZ: GRISSOM'S PROGRAM A GREAT STORY IN THE MAKING

BY JON COOPER

DURING MARQUIS GRISSOM'S 17-year playing career, no one ever questioned his heart.

On Sunday, Nov. 4, at Turner Field's 755 Club, Grissom once again proved his heart is not only big, but also in the right place. That night, he hosted the Marquis Grissom Baseball Association (MGBA) first Get In the Game Charity Gala, to help kids in need get out and play baseball. That goal has been Grissom's top priority since founding MGBA (June '07 CT) in August 1996.

"For me, it's about our kids," said the centerfielder who caught the last out in the Braves' 1995 World Series victory and won Gold Gloves with the team in '95 and '96. "Baseball has been so good to me that I feel obligated to go back and help other kids."

Atlanta TV news anchor Wes Sarginson emceed the event, which was attended by former major leaguer Cecil Fielder (AL home run champ in 1990 and '91 with Detroit) and Braves alumni Frank Thomas (OF, 1961, '65), Dwight Smith (OF, 1995-96), Jerome Walton (OF, 1996), Michael Tucker (OF, 1997-98) and Terry Harper (OF, 1980-86).

Other former players were represented in a silent auction at the gala, which featured baseballs signed by Bobby Cox, Terry Pendleton, the 1997 Cleveland Indians, and current players Kerry Wood, Mark Prior, Mark Buehrle, Roy Halladay and Mike Cameron, jerseys from Grissom, John Smoltz and Cal Ripken, and a rare painting of Gary Sheffield - a close friend of Grissom's and a benefactor of the foundation. Ironically, the painting celebrates the Marlins' 1997 World Series championship, won at the expense of Grissom's Indians.

Smoltz served as guest speaker and talked at length about the MGBA's impact on future generations and Grissom's never-ending dedication, especially to the group's showcase event - the Smoltz-Grissom Wood Bat Classic. The tournament, which has been played in Atlanta annually since 1999, attracts teams from all over the United States to help raise money to provide scholarships for economically disadvantaged youth, enabling them to participate in baseball programs.

"It's been a great pleasure to work with Marquis, but I'm going to be honest, he does 95 percent of the work," said Smoltz. "When you believe in something and you work very hard for something, you're giving extra drive that other people don't have, and you're going to see it through. That's why I'm part of this endeavor with Marquis. Because I want to see it through."

#CREATIVTOUCH PHOTOGRAPHY

Marquis Grissom greets featured speaker John Smoltz at Grissom's first Get In The Game Charity Gala.

In addition to the Wood Bat Classic, MGBA sponsors a traveling team and works with the Fulton County Parks and Recreation Department to repair and equip fields and provide things that are sometimes taken for granted, such as equipment.

"I didn't realize how expensive baseball can be," said Grissom, an Atlanta native who was MVP of the 1997 ALCS for Cleveland, with a laugh. "Money that is raised here tonight will go toward sodding fields, putting in new dugouts, pitchers' mounds, bullpens, batting cages. We have fields that are not being utilized. My goal is to get every field up to par so a kid can go out and get the opportunity to play competitive baseball.

"I also want to get more kids into college," he said. "This year we had the opportunity for 18 kids to go to college on partial scholarships or full scholarships."

"I can only tell you the story is yet to be told," said Smoltz. "I believe this is a great story in the making."

"Hopefully in a couple of years there will be some success stories coming out of MGBA," added Grissom. "I know there will."

BIRTHDAYS

DECEMBER

1ST	GREG MCMICHAEL (41) REGGIE SANDERS (40)
2ND	ADRIAN DEVINE (56) STEVE SISCO (38) **PETER MOYLAN (29)**
3RD	DAVE EILERS (71) DAMON BERRYHILL (44) PAUL BYRD (37) MATT CHILDERS (29)
4TH	LEE BALES (63) ALEXIS INFANTE (46)
5TH	GARY ROENICKE (53) GERMAN JIMENEZ (45)
6TH	FREDDIE VELAZQUEZ (70) AMADO SAMUEL (69) ARNOLD UMBACH (65) STEVE BEDROSIAN (50)
7TH	DON CARDWELL (72) OZZIE VIRGIL (51)
8TH	JOHN MIZEROCK (47)
9TH	ED ROMERO (50) TONY TARASCO (37)
10TH	BOB ROSELLI (76) BOB PRIDDY (68) PAUL ASSENMACHER (47) **BRANDON JONES (24)**
11TH	JOHNNY O'BRIEN (77)
12TH	RALPH GARR (62)
13TH	MIKE MORDECAI (40)
16TH	NEIL CHRISLEY (76)
17TH	CURTIS PRIDE (39) MIKE CATHER (37)
18TH	GINO CIMOLI (78) JIM CLANCY (52) CHRIS SEELBACH (35)
19TH	JOE SLUSARSKI (41) **RAFAEL SORIANO (28)**
20TH	MARC VALDES (36)
21ST	BOB RUSH (82) JACK DANIELS (80) PAUL CASANOVA (66) **ROGER MCDOWELL (47)** **BUDDY CARLYLE (30)** **ROYCE RING (27)**
22ND	ALEX MONCHAK (88) LONNIE SMITH (52) GARY COOPER (51) DAVID NIED (39)
23RD	DAVE MAY (64) PASCUAL MATOS (33)
24TH	KEVIN MILLWOOD (33)
25TH	DICK MANVILLE (81)
26TH	STU MILLER (80) WAYNE CAUSEY (71) JOHN BRAUN (68) RAY SADECKI (67) CHRIS CHAMBLISS (59) CHARLES THOMAS (29)
28TH	DON THOMPSON (84) STEVE KUCZEK (83) ZANE SMITH (47) MELVIN NIEVES (36)
29TH	ROD NICHOLS (43) JARET WRIGHT (32) JIM BROWER (35)
30TH	FRANK TORRE (76)
31ST	SAM MCCONNELL (32) CHRIS REITSMA (30)

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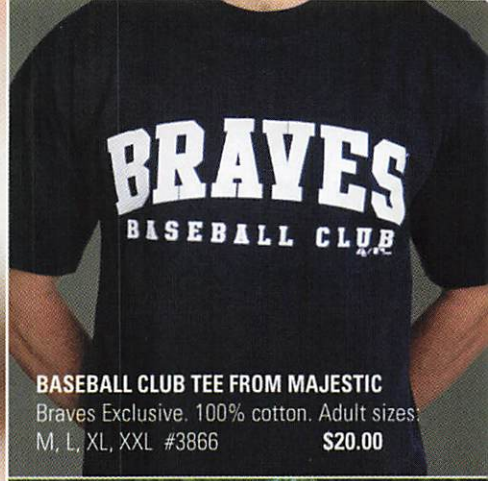

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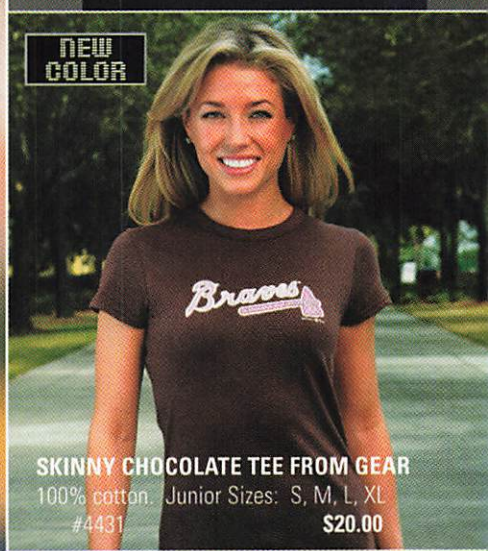

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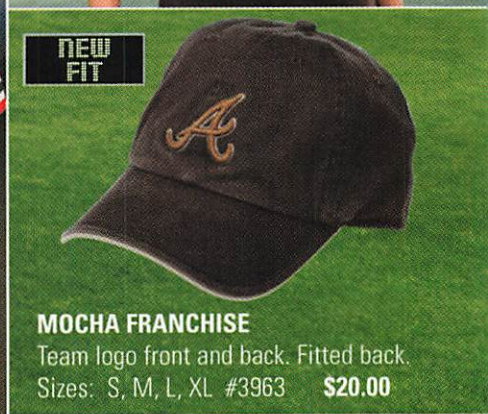

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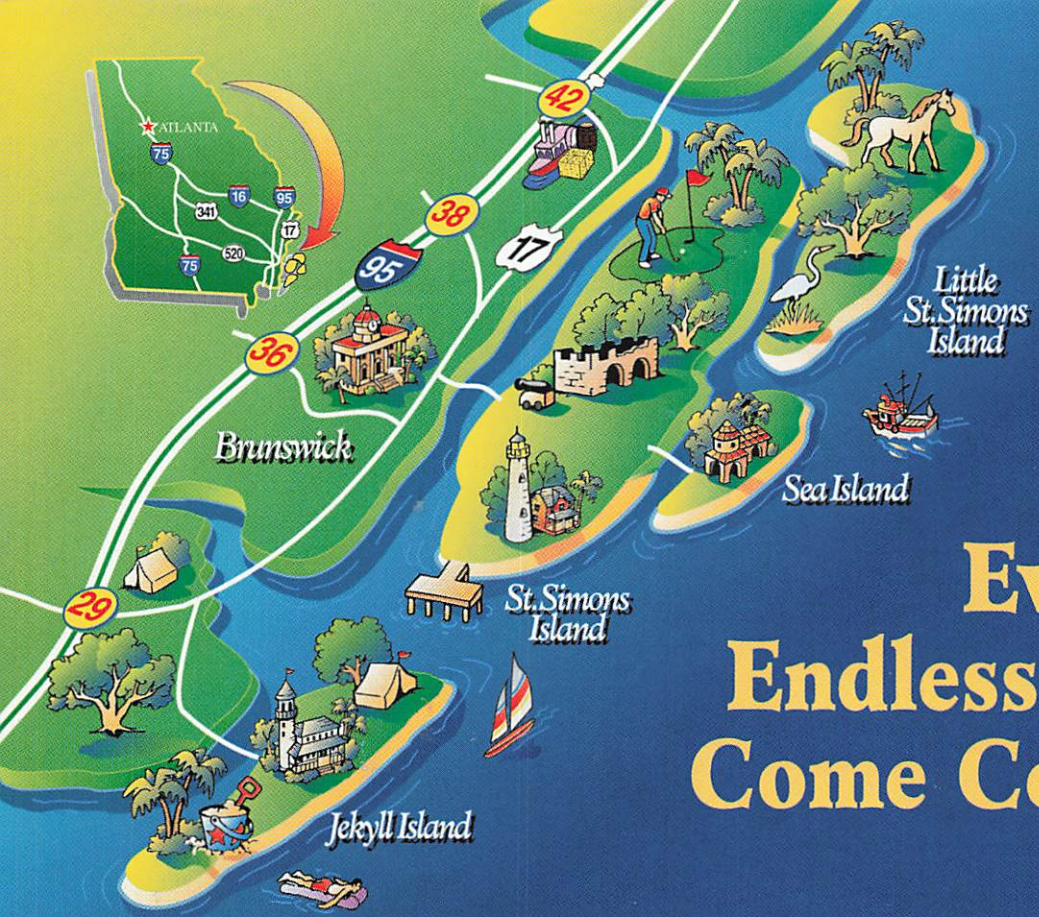

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